

# GREAT ESCAPES





## WELCOME

Dear valued client,

Welcome to our new-look *Great Escapes*. While you can still expect a collection of our finest holiday offers, we've gone for something a touch different for this issue.

Consider this your insiders' guide to the latest and greatest in the world of travel. There are articles on exciting new flight routes, reviews of the best in cruising for 2018 and first-hand accounts of the world's ultimate road trips. Drawing on their extensive travels, it's all written by our destination specialists, having just returned from their latest fact-finding missions. As ever, their expert guidance is only ever a call away.

So, read on to find out what a night on the Orient Express is really like, where the world's first luxury discovery yacht is sailing and what the greatest Italian road trips are. We've even got the lowdown on the best and brightest hotels for 2018, along with information on the first non-stop flight between Europe and Australia.

Lastly, while you'll be treated to the usual complimentary UK airport lounge access on all our holidays, we've got something extra special to celebrate the new *Great Escapes*. Save for Namibia, **all of our self-drive holidays come with car hire completely free of charge**. Just hurry, the offer ends 31 January 2018.

Dr Ian Wilson  
Founder & Chairman

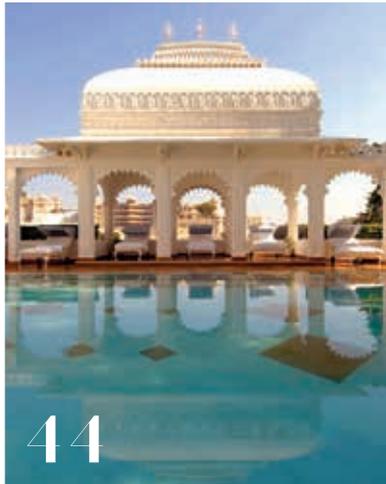




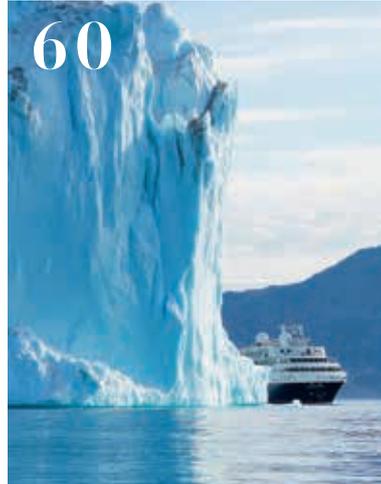
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All prices, fares, hotels and tours described in this brochure are correct at the time of going to press (13/12/2017) and are subject to change and availability. Prices shown are a guide only and may not include peak travel periods such as Christmas and Easter. Many of the flights and flight-inclusive holidays in this brochure are financially protected by the ATOL scheme but ATOL protection does not apply to all holiday and travel services listed. Please ask us to confirm what protection may apply to your booking. If you do not receive an ATOL Certificate then the booking will not be ATOL protected. If you do receive an ATOL Certificate but all the parts of your trip are not listed on it, those parts will not be ATOL protected. For more information about financial protection and the ATOL Certificate go to: [atol.org.uk/atolcertificate](http://atol.org.uk/atolcertificate). The Wexas ATOL number is 2873. Full Wexas booking conditions can be found at [wexas.com/bookingconditions](http://wexas.com/bookingconditions).





# LIFE ON THE OPEN ROAD

Over the next few pages, our destination experts, having travelled extensively throughout their specialist regions, have put together a collection of their favourite self-drive routes. Fawn Carr pairs the USA's greatest road trips with their literary heavyweights before we head off America's beaten track to Michigan, Oregon and California's lesser-visited gems. It's all packed full of first-hand advice, whether you're deciding between Australia and New Zealand or Canada's east and west. There's also plenty closer to home, from the Italian classics to the underrated beauty of Norway's fjord roads and the heritage routes of Spain and Portugal. Chris Kyprianou puts together his favourite road trips based around stays in the historic palaces and castles of the Iberian Peninsula.

What's more, with the sole exception of Namibia and the UK, **all of our self-drive itineraries come with free car hire.** But hurry, this exclusive offer is available for a limited time only. You'll need to book by 31 January to take advantage.



# America's great literary



Wexas USA specialist *Fawn Carr* picks out her favourite reads to accompany the USA's most iconic road trips. You can enjoy any one of them with free car hire when you book by the end of January.



SAVE UP TO  
£455 PP  
Book by 31 January 18

## Pacific Coast Highway – *Big Sur, Jack Kerouac*

“The more ups and downs, the more joy I feel,” opines Jack Kerouac in his fictionalised biography, *Big Sur*. It’s a statement that applies as much to the author himself as it does the novel’s eponymous road – a spectacular route that maps the Californian coast where the Santa Lucia Mountains rise abruptly from Pacific cliffs. It’s a rollercoaster of bridge hops, long lefts and sweeping rights. But, it forms just a 71-mile segment of the Pacific Coast Highway, a 665-mile epic that links San Francisco and Los Angeles, offering stops at pretty vineyards, Monterey’s dolphins and a fantastic choice of white-sand beaches.

**A 12-DAY PACIFIC COAST SELF-DRIVE STARTS FROM £1,460 PP** incl. flights, 10 nights accommodation & 6 days car hire. For a full itinerary, visit [wexas.com/100897](http://wexas.com/100897) or call **020 7838 5894**.



SAVE UP TO  
£310 PP  
Book by 31 January 18

## Florida – *Ernest Hemingway*

While Hemingway’s oeuvre spans from Africa to war-torn Europe, the great author himself chose to take up residency in the Florida Keys. And, with good reason. A paradise archipelago of palm-fringed islands, it divides the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico, forming a postcard-perfect spread of idyllic beaches. It’s all knitted together by a network of scenic bridge crossings, making for a truly epic drive that concludes with a chance visit to Hemingway’s home itself, found in idyllic Key West. Then, back on the Florida mainland, you’ll be treated to Spanish-colonial heritage, Miami’s glitz and glam, and Naples, a bohemian beach retreat.

**A 12-DAY FLORIDA SELF-DRIVE STARTS FROM £1,745 PP** incl. flights, 10 nights accommodation & 9 days car hire. For a full itinerary, visit [wexas.com/102974](http://wexas.com/102974) or call **020 7838 5894**.



# road trips

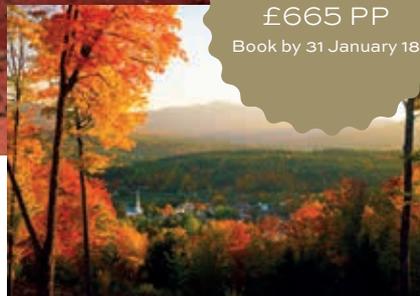
SAVE UP TO  
£570 PP

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SAVE UP TO  
£665 PP

Book by 31 January 18



## Route 66 – *The Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck

Connecting Chicago to Los Angeles, the Mother Road maps the route taken by the migrants who headed west to escape the Great Depression of the 1930s. It's a journey shared by thousands and immortalised in one of Steinbeck's greatest works, *The Grapes of Wrath*. And today it remains the ultimate road trip for those who want to get a taste of the famous American optimism. Indeed, from the ghost towns of the Mojave Desert to the open cornfields of Illinois, there's a pervading sense of a romantic past to it all. You'll also have the chance of happy detours to Las Vegas and the Grand Canyon before ending with some well-deserved relaxation on the beaches of Santa Monica. It's a far cry from the hardship faced by Steinbeck's characters.

**A 19-DAY ROUTE 66 SELF-DRIVE STARTS FROM £2,685 PP** incl. flights, 17 nights accommodation & 14 days car hire. For a full itinerary, visit [wexas.com/138248](http://wexas.com/138248) or call **020 7838 5894**.

## New England – *The Crucible*, Arthur Miller

Given that much of America's early history is tied up in this six-state huddle, it's no surprise that New England is rich with literary tradition. I could have picked any of the great Romantic writers, from Thoreau to Dickinson, but few capture the region's puritanical intensity as well as Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, a dramatisation of the Salem witch trials. Indeed, a road trip to New England is a step into the past; highlights include the Civil War battlefields, the colonial-era charm of Newport, and Boston, where cobbled laneways lead between some of the country's most important sites. Of course, there's plenty of scenery to enjoy on your road trip as well, including the Green Mountains and the quaint seaside villages of Cape Cod.

**A 16-DAY NEW ENGLAND SELF-DRIVE STARTS FROM £1,595 PP** incl. flights, 14 nights accommodation & 13 days car hire. For a full itinerary, visit [wexas.com/101287](http://wexas.com/101287) or call **020 7838 5894**.

## Canyon Country – *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, Hunter S. Thompson

No other author captures the decadence and pure eccentricity of Las Vegas quite like Hunter S. Thompson, who brings out all of its contradictions in a whirlwind of manic prose. But, just as his best-selling novel heads out for a drive in the desert, so should you. Sublime routes bring you between the flat-topped mesas of Monument Valley, the spindling arches of Moab and that great national wonder – the Grand Canyon. Together, they constitute a selection of some of America's finest national parks, with further highlights including the Bryce Canyon's hoodoo spires and Zion, where dirt-red rock formations contrast with valleys of bright verdure – perfect for ranging hikes.

**A 15-DAY CANYON COUNTRY SELF-DRIVE STARTS FROM £3,585 PP** incl. flights, 13 nights accommodation & 14 days car hire. For a full itinerary, visit [wexas.com/102975](http://wexas.com/102975) or call **020 7838 5894**.



# Michigan renewed

Like Portland opposite, Detroit is a city resurgent. Following decades of outmigration and widespread underfunding, a surge of prudent investment and the return of big automotive has resulted in its first population increase in half a century. It's a palpably exciting time to visit. New bike routes are being built on reclaimed train tracks, artisanal farmers' markets are resplendent in colourful murals and a refreshed waterfront now gleams as brightly as the city's skyscrapers. A nascent hipster scene is even finding its feet in boutique workshops, before losing them in alleyway bars. That's without mentioning such exhibition heavyweights as the Henry Ford and Motown museums, where you can step onto the bus where Rosa Parks sat strong and into the studio where Marvin Gaye and the Temptations sang true.

But, as with Oregon, there's much more to Michigan than its city icon. Carved out by glaciers some 12,000 years ago, it's home to some truly spectacular scenery. Over half the state is given over to forests, its winter wonderland makes for ideal skiing and gentle green contours are sculpted into both championship-standard golf courses and Traverse City's award-winning vineyards. It's got the numbers to back it up as well, with its landscapes protected by no fewer than seven national parks and 103 state parks, ideal for days spent on



hikes and bike rides and nights spent camping under the stars.

However, it's the Great Lakes that demand the most attention. Unfurling as great horizonless seas, they offer everything from surf beaches and giant sand dunes to historic military fortifications and 129 lighthouses, resplendent in that iconic white and red.

Be sure to also hit the waters themselves, with canoe paddles, fishing excursions and sailing trips bringing you to shipwreck dives and car-free islands. Prime among them is Mackinac, where the only form of transportation is by horse or bicycle and colourful clapboard houses remember all the charm of yesteryear. Just don't forget to sample the local fudge.



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£685 PP  
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## A 14-DAY GREAT LAKES SELF-DRIVE STARTS FROM £1,960 PP

Incl. flights, 12 nights accommodation, round-trip ferry to Mackinac Island & 12 days car hire. For a full itinerary visit [wexas.com/140387](http://wexas.com/140387) or call **020 7838 5894**.



# Destination Oregon

Oregon is enjoying something of a renaissance of late. And, although once overshadowed by its bigger West-Coast cousins, it's Portland – the state's largest city – that's leading the charge. There's an artisan coffee house on every corner, galleries exhibit the latest in local work and microbreweries serve up cutting-edge beers. Portland has a certain energy about it. That's not to say, however, that it's lost touch with its roots, with the state's natural beauty invited into the city limits with verdant parks and tree-lined streets. It's all watched over by giant Mt. Hood, keeping Portland honest.

Indeed, it's their natural world that Oregonians are perhaps most proud of. Windswept beaches front verdant forests, while snow-capped peaks give way to sweeping rangelands and dramatic valleys. It's got the superlatives to back it up, too. Oregon features the continent's deepest river gorge,

the world's second-most-climbed mountain and the country's deepest lake. Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuge even features the largest concentration of wintering bald eagles – a true American icon. It's all showcased with Oregon's 230-strong collection of state parks.

But, it's not just for looking at and measuring. Much of Oregon's charm lies in getting out there and exploring; those wild rivers make for some of the finest white-water rafting and lush, waterfall-troubled woodland makes for ideal hikes or

bike rides. After all, nearly half of the state is forested. Alternatively, live out your Old West fantasy with a stay in a historic ranch in the high desert of the state's east.

Of course, this being America, the best way to knit it all together is with a road trip. The twin draws of coast and mountains mean that one moment you'll be summiting high passes and the next sweeping between remote coves and quaint seaside towns. It'll come as no surprise that Oregon features more scenic highways than any other state. What's more, with Delta Air Lines' new non-stop flights between London Heathrow and Portland, they've never been closer.

## AN 11-DAY OREGON SELF-DRIVE STARTS FROM £1,720 PP

Incl. flights, 9 nights accommodation & 10 days car hire. For a full itinerary, visit [wexas.com/134035](http://wexas.com/134035) or call 0207 838 5894.





# THE ALTERNATIVE CALIFORNIA

## Beyond the golden-sand good looks



While the likes of Hollywood’s glitz and Yosemite’s natural wonders rightly grab the headlines, there’s also plenty in the breaths between the Golden State’s great icons. Indeed, spread some 800 miles along the Pacific Coast, the charms of California are wonderfully diverse. One moment you could be tasting your way through world-class vineyards and the next hiking through grand redwood forests. Taken in isolation, it’s even the fifth largest world economy – having just leapfrogged a pre-Brexit Britain. So, to help you get the most out of the lesser-visited California, Wexas USA specialist *Patrick Griffin* has prepared the following distillation of his favourite spots. And remember, you’ll enjoy free hire car on your 2018 California road trip if you book before the end of January,

### Greater Palm Springs

Long a favourite feet-up for LA’s well heeled, Palm Springs is the chance to follow in the 1950s footsteps of Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin. And, the Rat Pack would be right at home here to this day, settling in among the modernist architecture and glittering nightlife; this is America at its exuberant best, chintzy retro-chic and all. Then, alongside the region’s eight other cities – glamorous Palm Desert and the thermal soaks of Desert Hot Springs are two particular highlights – there are the region’s wilderness areas. Cycle through the San Bernardino National Forest and hike through Big Morongo Canyon before taking in otherworldly deserts of Joshua Tree National Park.



### Napa Valley

Simply put, Napa Valley is one of the world’s leading wine regions. Although that’s something not lost on its many fans, it’s not difficult to find a vineyard of one’s own, with its gentle green contours terraced into over 400 wineries. You’ll soon find your favourite between the sharper purity of the mountain varietals and the ripe, powerful flavours of the more fertile valley floor. Then, with old-growth forests fringing backcountry roads and pretty chateaux gazing out from hilltop bumps, there’s plenty more to Napa than wine. After exploring on hikes, river paddles and laneway cycle rides, end your days here with one of its many superb restaurants.



## CALIFORNIA CLASSIC – USA WEST COAST

17-DAY TAILOR-MADE SELF-DRIVE

This curated itinerary combines Napa Valley and Palm Springs with many of the West Coast's big hitters. Along with the natural drama of Yosemite, Death Valley and neighbouring Arizona's Grand Canyon, there's the big-city glitz of Las Vegas and San Francisco before you end with some beach relaxation in Santa Monica.

**PRICES START FROM £1,960 PP** incl. flights, 15 nights accommodation & 11 days car hire. For more information, visit [wexas.com/102973](https://wexas.com/102973) or call **0207 838 5894**.



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**£535 PP**  
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## Sonoma County

Just a 45-mile hop north of San Francisco, bucolic Sonoma County is an enticing alternative to its Napa Valley neighbour. Just like its sibling, Sonoma features over 400 wineries, with its diverse chardonnays and tannic cabernet sauvignons among my personal favourites. Yet wine doesn't have a monopoly on its soils, with the county also home to dozens of artisanal breweries, distilleries and cider houses. Be sure to pair it all with a tasting visit to one of the region's markets or farm-to-table restaurants; the clam chowder in Bodega Bay is a special favourite. Then, once you've had your fill, move out of the 19th-century charm of Sonoma itself to kayak along the Russian River, wonder at the Armstrong Redwoods – the tallest living things on Earth – or explore the county's 55 miles of pristine coastline, ideal for beach relaxation and ranging hikes.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

14-DAY TAILOR-MADE SELF-DRIVE

This fortnight-long itinerary pairs Sonoma's wines with ultra-scenic drives around beautiful Lake Tahoe, Yosemite's natural wonders, Sacramento's gold-rush heritage and Victorian Mendocino, a bohemian favourite. It all begins with the eclectic neighbourhoods of a true city great – San Francisco.

**PRICES START FROM £1,780 PP** incl. flights, 12 nights accommodation & 10 days car hire. For more information, visit [wexas.com/102973](https://wexas.com/102973) or call **020 7838 5894**.



SAVE UP TO  
**£515 PP**  
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# Canada: East v West



## HIGHLIGHTS OF EASTERN CANADA

14-DAY TAILOR-MADE SELF-DRIVE

Canada's eastern provinces – Ontario and Québec – are blessed with a unique rural beauty and a culture steeped in the intertwined histories of Europe and North America. And, this tailor-made loop takes in all of the region's highlights, departing from skyscraping Toronto, bound for the Gilded Age mansions of the Thousand Islands and luxury stays among the French beauty of Montréal and Québec City. Here, cafés spill out onto pavements, 18th-century façades rise in ornate flourishes and the latter's walled city – Canada's only one – is a fairytale straight out of the 1600s. Then, after contrasting Ottawa's Gothic Revival architecture with the forested wilds of Algonquin Provincial Park you'll arrive in Niagara to compare its headline-grabbing falls with its idyllic, wine-country surrounds.

**PRICES START FROM £1,740 PP** incl. flights, 12 nights accommodation & 10 days car hire. For a full itinerary, visit [wexas.com/101297](https://wexas.com/101297) or call **020 7838 5894**.

## THE WILDLIFE OF QUÉBEC

11-DAY TAILOR-MADE SELF-DRIVE

When you head out of Québec's cities, a whole wilderness opens up. This handpicked itinerary will see you skirting glittering lake shores and plunging through forested hills, spotting moose on ranging hikes and whales on an included cruise along the St. Lawrence River. You'll also enjoy a stay at a timber lodge overlooking postcard-perfect Lake Sacacomie. Here, you'll return from days spent kayaking and mountain biking to spa treatments and indulgent half-board dining that shows off the region's seasonal ingredients. Then, in between stops at 1920s villages and cascading waterfalls, you'll bookend your trip with stays in Montréal and Québec City. While the former impresses with the magnificent Basilique Notre-Dame, it's perhaps the latter's Chateau Frontenac that lingers longest in the memory – a great castle hotel that dates to 1893.

**PRICES START FROM £2,785 PP** incl. flights, 9 nights accommodation, 7 days car hire & selected excursions. For a full itinerary, visit [wexas.com/145117](https://wexas.com/145117) or call **020 7838 5894**.





Wexas specialist **Debbie Mayger** picks out her favourite Canada itineraries to help you choose between the country's east and west. Book by 31 January for free car hire on all of her featured trips.



## VANCOUVER, WHISTLER AND THE ROCKIES

10-DAY TAILOR-MADE SELF-DRIVE

This superb-value getaway is a Canadian road trip at its epic best. Driving routes with such names as the 'Sea-to-Sky Highway' and 'Icefields Parkway' you'll map coastlines, summit mountains and uncover hidden waterfalls as you venture deep into the Rockies, linking the twin national park delights of Banff and Jasper. We've also included a whole range of excursions, from gondola rides and dips in hot springs to visits to gold-rush outposts and even off-road adventures out onto ancient glaciers. You can also expect to spot bears and elk in between cosy stays in alpine-chic lodges. It all begins in Vancouver. Often found topping lists of the world's most liveable cities, there's something ineffably attractive about its cobblestone streets and waterfront walks, all set against a backdrop of the snow-dusted Coast Mountains.

**PRICES START FROM £1,440 PP** incl. flights, 8 nights accommodation, 8 days car hire & selected excursions. For a full itinerary, visit [wexas.com/146735](http://wexas.com/146735) or call **020 7838 5894**.

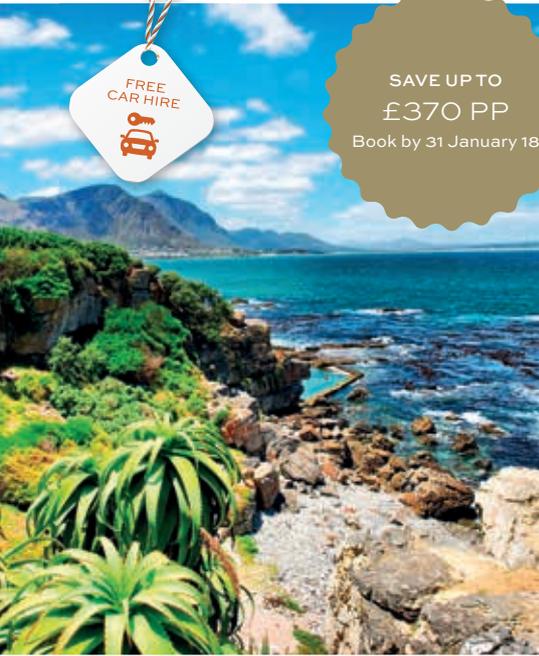
## VANCOUVER ISLAND: GRIZZLIES, ORCAS & BLACK BEARS

11-DAY TAILOR-MADE SELF-DRIVE

Moving out from Vancouver's urbane charms, this curated road trip will bring you into the wilderness of Vancouver Island. Here, ultra-scenic drives, ferry hops and even floatplane flights will see you spot grizzly bears and humpback whales among hidden waterways and old-growth forests. Throughout, you'll enjoy a full spread of included excursions, from island bike rides to whale-watching cruises and bear-spotting walks. You'll even stay in a floating lodge so remote that it's only accessible by seaplane, enjoying hearty full-board dining in between naturalist-led hikes. Then, after driving over high mountain passes, you'll have some time to relax with some beach walks on the island's south coast before finishing in Victoria – an artists' community of unique First-Nations heritage.

**PRICES START FROM £1,625 PP** incl. flights, 9 nights accommodation, 7 days car hire & selected excursions. For a full itinerary, visit [wexas.com/102231](http://wexas.com/102231) or call **020 7838 5894**.





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## THE GARDEN ROUTE

Simply put, this is South Africa's quintessential driving holiday; if it's your first time in the country, chances are you're heading to the Garden Route. And, with good reason. Running along the south coast, it links Mossel Bay's idyllic beaches in the west and Storm River's dramatic coastal walks in the east, taking 190 miles to weave gently between forested mountains, craggy clifftop sections and the great deserts of the Little Karoo. There are few other places that feature such a rich concentration of scenic diversity. However, it's not all for show. Stops range from Oudtshoorn's ostrich farms and

quaint seaside towns that serve up world-class oysters to the kayaking rivers of the appropriately named Wilderness National Park. It also lines up perfectly with Cape Town's icons, the Winelands, the whales of Hermanus and the Big-Five reserves of the Eastern Cape.

**A 16-DAY SELF-DRIVE INCLUDING CAPE TOWN, THE WINELANDS, GARDEN ROUTE AND AN EASTERN CAPE SAFARI IS AVAILABLE FROM £1,950 PP** incl. flights, 15 days car hire, 11 nights B&B accommodation & 2 nights full-board safari with twice-daily game drives. For a full itinerary, visit [wexas.com/102183](http://wexas.com/102183) or call **020 7838 5894**.

# Self-drive Southern Africa

## THE WEST COAST

The west coast of South Africa offers something more off the beaten track. Leaving the bustle of Cape Town behind, the single-lane N7 sweeps north, with the rolling greenery of the Western Cape slowly melding into desert. However, before you're lost in aridity, you'll be hopping between unspoilt beaches watched over by pretty whitewashed fishing villages. Keep your eyes peeled for whales, dolphins and even penguins, while hikes and kayak paddles bring you into a wetland interior teeming with birdlife. I've left the best until last, though – the Cederberg Mountains. Here, great sandstone pillars have

been warped over the millennia into hulking, gnarled formations – the canvas for tribal bush art made some 10,000 years ago. It's also home to one of my favourite accommodations in South Africa – Bushmans Kloof Wilderness Reserve. Here you'll find adventure activities mixed with spa treatments and delicious dining.

**AN 11-DAY SELF-DRIVE ALONG THE WEST COAST IS AVAILABLE FROM £1,775 PP** incl. flights, 9 days car hire, 5 nights B&B accommodation & 3 nights full-board at Bushmans Kloof with selected activities. For a full itinerary, visit [wexas.com/135459](http://wexas.com/135459) or call **020 7838 5894**.



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£305 PP  
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## KWAZULU-NATAL

KwaZulu-Natal – even the name conjures up the exotic. And, like the Garden Route before it, South Africa's easternmost region is impossibly diverse. One moment you could be sunning yourself on a golden beach and the next hiking through cragged mountains. The Drakensberg Range is a special highlight for its reaching basalt jags and verdant foothills. Of course, the driving is equally scenic, with dry grasslands contrasted by the rolling undulations of the Zulu War's battlefields – a unique part of South African history, today brought to life by evocative tours, museums and visits to tribal settlements.

This being South Africa, there are also some superb safari options. Our pick? &Beyond's Phinda Game Reserve, whose communities are supported by our Wexas Travel Foundation charity. You'll have the chance to go in search of the Big Five and watch cheetahs teach their cubs to hunt before returning to your ultra-luxury accommodation.

**A 10-DAY SELF-DRIVE IN KWA-ZULU-NATAL IS AVAILABLE FROM £2,475 PP** incl. flights, 9 days car hire, 1 night B&B, 4 nights half-board & 2 nights full-board safari with twice-daily game drives. For a full itinerary, visit [wexas.com/102019](http://wexas.com/102019) or call **020 7838 5894**.



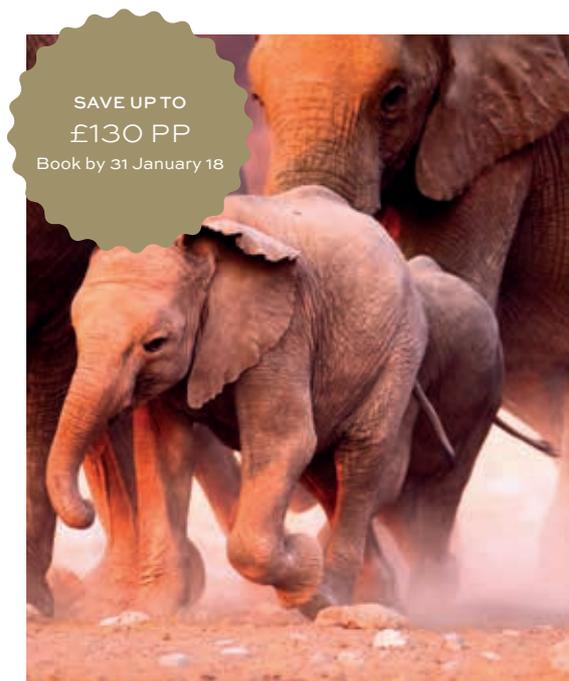
Wexas Africa specialist **Rui Ribeiro** picks out his favourite road trips in his native South Africa. There's everything from serene winelands to the cragged Drakensberg Mountains before he hops over the border into Namibia's wilds. And, with free car hire on all South Africa road trips booked before the end of January, there's never been a better time to travel to the Rainbow Nation.

## NAMIBIA

The phrase 'Africa for beginners' isn't meant as a slight. Between truly epic landscapes, gripping wildlife experiences and a unique heritage that blends colonial influence with rich tribal traditions, Namibia is an ideal welcome to the continent. And, the driving is easy; it's commonplace to not see another sole on the road for hours at a time, all the while sublimely severe deserts sweep by. What's more, although the paved roads are good, picking up a 4WD and heading on to the gravel is a simple and surprisingly rewarding way to explore. Indeed, it's one of southern Africa's finest destinations for self-

drive safaris, with easy waterhole routes in Etosha showcasing everything from cheetah and lions to rhino and giraffe. Then, outside of Namibia's national-park icon, there are quaint seaside towns, ancient rock carvings, giant dunes and ethereal Kolmanskop – an abandoned 20th-century mining town, now overcome with sand.

**A 16-DAY SELF-DRIVE TAKING IN NAMIBIA'S HIGHLIGHTS IS AVAILABLE FROM £3,095 PP** incl. flights, 14 days car hire & 13 nights accommodation on a mix of full-board, half-board & B&B basis. For a full itinerary, visit [wexas.com/102490](http://wexas.com/102490) or call **020 7838 5894**.





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£115 PP  
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## HIGHLIGHTS OF NEW ZEALAND

### 19-DAY TAILOR-MADE SELF-DRIVE

New Zealand's 268,000 square kilometres of towering mountains, flooded fjord troughs and even beach-fringed islands have presented a challenge for everyone from Maori settlers to high seas pioneers. Today, however, landscapes that once halted explorers now serve as a backdrop to ultra-scenic road trips. And, our signature Highlights of New Zealand itinerary brings modern-day adventurers right from north to south, taking in everything from giant glaciers to Rotorua's explosive geysers and Lake Tekapo's idyllic shimmer. Coastal sweeps will

also bring you between vineyard tastings and crescents of golden sand, either side of pauses at the country's city greats. There's maritime Auckland, hip Wellington, adventurous Queenstown and English Christchurch, while the country's Maori heritage adds further intrigue. In all, it's a route defined by truly dramatic scenery.

### PRICES START FROM £2,465 PP

Incl. flights, private transfers, 15 nights accommodation, selected meals, 14 days car hire & inter-island ferry crossing in Premium Plus. For a full, day-by-day itinerary, visit [wexas.com/103678](http://wexas.com/103678) or call **020 7838 5894**.

NEW ZEALAND

# Antipodean road trips: Choosing between Australia & New Zealand

## BEST OF THE SOUTH ISLAND

### 13-DAY TAILOR-MADE SELF-DRIVE

Although this shorter itinerary is ideal for those with less time, it also slows things down, offering you the chance to really appreciate the South Island's myriad delights. An overnight cruise on Doubtful Sound is a special highlight, sailing among its spectacular, green-dappled cliffs as onboard naturalists point out dolphins, fur seals and the rare penguin. That's without mentioning the whales you'll spot on your wildlife-spotting cruise in Kaikoura. And, after a gorgeous TranzAlpine train journey, you'll also have some extra time to take in the Fox and Franz Josef

glaciers with a heli-hike. Then, there's a choice between taking things easy with Queenstown's gentle hikes and vineyards or adventuring with its ski slopes and high-adrenaline activities. Lastly, mountain passes will see you end with some lakeside relaxation in Wanaka and Tekapo. Here, sweeping drives showcase snow-capped peaks.

### PRICES START FROM £2,695 PP

Incl. flights, private transfers, 8 nights accommodation, selected meals, 8 days car hire, 1 night half-board cruise & TranzAlpine rail journey. For a full itinerary, visit [wexas.com/102596](http://wexas.com/102596) or call **020 7838 5894**.



SAVE UP TO  
£150 PP  
Book by 31 January 18



## THE GREAT SOUTHERN TOURING ROUTE

12-DAY TAILOR-MADE SELF-DRIVE

For those who prefer coastal scenery to mountains, this curated road trip centres around one of the world’s most scenic stretches of tarmac – the Great Ocean Road. Spanning some 150 miles, it hugs the coast of Australia’s southeastern tip, gently lazing between precipitous cliffs and crashing azure waters. In among it all, you can expect to uncover idyllic surf beaches, colonial fishing towns and crashing waterfalls clad in old-growth rainforests. Of course, the seabound limestone pillars of the 12 Apostles are a particular highlight. It all makes for decidedly epic drives, while getting

out on your own two feet offers equal excitement. Either side, there’s the Aboriginal rock art and kangaroos of the Grampian Mountains, and Melbourne – a city alive with laneway cafés and sporting masterclasses. And, with your trip beginning with a luxury stay here, you’ll have plenty of opportunity to learn just why it’s often cited as Australia’s – and one of the world’s – most liveable cities.

**PRICES START FROM £1,545 PP**

Incl. flights, 8 nights B&B accommodation & 10 days car hire. For a full, day-by-day itinerary, visit [wexas.com/104235](http://wexas.com/104235) or call an Australia specialist on **020 7838 5894**.



With near-empty roads and space to spare, Australia and New Zealand truly are among the world’s greatest self-drive destinations. Here, native New Zealander and Wexas Australasia specialist *Daniel Wright* guides you between the vast deserts of the outback and the lush rainforests of Aotearoa.



AUSTRALIA

## A TASTE OF AUSTRALIA

23-DAY TAILOR-MADE SELF-DRIVE

Really two road trips in one, this is your chance to showcase much of Australia’s highlights. You’ll start with Sydney, taking in its harbour icons with a luxury yacht cruise, before collecting your hire car and heading into the Hunter Valley to sample its famous vineyards; they make for idyllic driving scenery. Then, climbing up into the misted Blue Mountains, you’ll explore gorges and eucalyptus forests on bushwalking hikes. A flight hop will next see you on to the Red Centre where you’ll drive out into the outback with an Aboriginal guide for sunset views of Uluru, folkloric stories

and dinner under the giant, starry sky. Then, flying back to the coast and Palm Cove, you’ll enjoy some beach relaxation and a snorkelling cruise out to the Great Barrier Reef. Conclude with a final scenic drive into the Atherton Tablelands where you’ll stay in a timber treehouse, complete with spa bath and spectacular views over the surrounding rainforest.

**PRICES START FROM £3,885 PP**

Incl. flights, private transfers, 18 nights B&B accommodation, 13 days car hire, Sydney Harbour cruise, Uluru tour, Sounds of Silence dinner & Low Isles cruise. For a full itinerary, visit [wexas.com/104236](http://wexas.com/104236) or call **020 7838 5894**.



SAVE UP TO  
**£260 PP**  
Book by 31 January 18



# Living *la dolce vita*



## ITALY'S BEST DRIVING HOLIDAYS



It's the home of Ferrari, Lamborghini, Alfa Romeo and, erm, Fiat. So, what better country to explore by car than Italy? Having travelled from its heel to its toe, our Europe specialist **Miranda Berliand** has put together the following collection of the country's finest driving holidays. A true celebration of *la dolce vita*, there's everything from the classics of the Amalfi Coast and Tuscany down to such lesser-known gems such as Puglia.

### Tuscany & the Amalfi Coast

Tuscany is the Italy of postcards, of coffee-table magazines and, these days, of viral social media posts. Indeed, around every bend in its lazily wending roads you'll be treated to a fresh vista of medieval towns and horizon-beating vineyards. Our recommended route will see you start with Pisa's famous tower before heading out into the region's medieval stone villages, taking in the likes of San Gimignano's centuries-old wonders and Volterra's Roman amphitheatre. Then, a serenely fertile countryside will see you south to another of Italy's headline acts – the Amalfi Coast. While you'll know it from its postcard-perfect jumble of pastel-coloured houses and lemon-scented groves, there's also some truly spectacular driving routes to explore. Perhaps its finest is the



Blue Ribbon Drive, a coastal sweep that traces its craggy cliffs, diving through tunnels and around hairpin bends to showcase some of Italy's most arresting scenery.

**PRICES START FROM £1,370 PP**  
Incl. flights, 10 days car hire, 9 nights B&B accommodation & selected touring. For a day-by-day itinerary, visit [wexas.com/139611](http://wexas.com/139611) or call 020 7838 5894.

### Best of Puglia

For something more off the beaten track, look no further than Puglia. Tucked away at the heel of Italy's boot, few make the journey south, but those that do are rewarded by beaches as deserted as its backcountry roads. This is a region of understated charm, with charming seaside towns opening out onto



pretty olive groves and road trips that link together nights spent in heritage farmhouses. In fact, instead of Renaissance flourishes, Puglia impresses with a certain historic severity. There's everything from the medieval grandeur of Trani to hilltop Ostuni's fortified whitewash and the Itria Valley's unique 19th-century beehive houses.

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#### PRICES START FROM £855 PP

Incl. flights, 10 days car hire, 9 nights B&B accommodation & selected touring. For a day-by-day itinerary, visit [wexas.com/104228](https://wexas.com/104228) or call 020 7838 5894.

## Northern Italy & Lakes

While the advent of rail travel inspired the first pilgrimages to Italy's famed lakes, the region now makes for some of the country's finest drives. Just as life by the water is all about taking it easy with lake dips and vineyard tastings, it's just the same when it comes to the roads. Sweeping routes bring you around lapping shores, with

giant vistas interrupted only by short tunnel gasps carved right out from the towering Alps. Our curated itinerary brings you to the fabled triumvirate – Como, Garda and Maggiore. Each is host to its own unique charms, whether it's fishing-village relaxation, Belle-Époque grandeur or visits to islands beautified by grand palaces.

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#### PRICES START FROM £1,315 PP

Incl. flights, private arrival and departure transfers, 9 days car hire & 11 nights B&B accommodation. For a full itinerary visit [wexas.com/104201](https://wexas.com/104201) or call 020 7838 5894.

## Best of Sicily

It's often said that Sicily feels like a country of its own. And, with so much on offer, it might as well be. One moment you could be relaxing on white-sand beaches and the next wandering through the wonders of the ancient world. There's everything from Agrigento's thousand-year-old 'Valley of the Temples' to Taormina's mountaintop Roman amphitheatre,



with plenty of medieval fascination in between. It's all criss-crossed by a network of backcountry roads, bringing you along idyllic coastlines and sweeping through verdant vineyards all to the backdrop of Mt. Etna's iconic silhouette.

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#### PRICES START FROM £690 PP

Incl. flights, 8 days car hire & 7 nights B&B accommodation. For a full itinerary, visit [wexas.com/103722](https://wexas.com/103722) or call 020 7838 5894.

## Tuscan Coast & Culture

Although we've already visited Tuscany, this route also combines the region's lesser-visited coast. It's where discerning Italians come to holiday, with long, seaside roads bringing you among a seemingly endless collection of sun-kissed beaches. Then, when you tire of the white sands, simply jump in your car and you'll be in Tuscan wine country, marvelling at Pisa's leaning icon, sipping freshly brewed coffee in Lucca's tree-shaded piazzas and exploring Florence's endless Renaissance wonders, played out across medieval cobbled streets. There's even the chance to stay in a pair of Italy's finest hotels – a private-beach getaway and a Michelin-starred palace.

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#### PRICES START FROM £1,340 PP

incl. UK airport lounge, flights, 4 days car hire, 8 nights B&B accommodation, Florence walking tour and private transfer to Pisa. For a day-by-day itinerary, visit [wexas.com/103858](https://wexas.com/103858) or call 020 7838 5894.



# THE PARADORS OF SPAIN...



Founded by King Alfonso XII in the early 20th century, Spain's paradors are a network of luxury hotels converted from some of the country's most important heritage sites. And, with over 90 to decide between, one moment you could be enjoying some convent respite outside of Madrid and the next staying among lances and cannons in a Basque Country castle. To help you decide, Wexas Europe specialist **Chris Kyprianou** has picked out his favourites below and showcased them in a pair of curated routes. What's more, those aged 55 or over are treated to preferential rates, and our five-night Parador Card offers discounted stays and meals at almost all of the collection.



## THE PYRENEES ROUTE

FOUR-DAY TAILOR-MADE SELF-DRIVE

Brushing up against the French and Andorran borders, this four-day drive brings you through spectacular Pyrenean scenery. Your first stop is La Seu d'Urgell for a stay in a Renaissance cloister. Then, after exploring its next-door cathedral, skiing on Olympic slopes or hiking in the "natural park", continue on to Viella and your spa accommodation. We recommend taking the Romanesque Route through the Aran Valley, stopping at pretty church villages. Your last stop is Bielsa for a mountain-lodge hideaway, returning to roaring log fires after exploring its nearby medieval castles.

**PRICES START FROM £305 PP** incl. flights, 4 days car hire & 3 nights B&B accommodation. Call **020 7838 5894** for more details.

## THE DON QUIXOTE ROUTE

EIGHT-DAY TAILOR-MADE SELF-DRIVE

On this loop around Madrid, discover the medieval sights that influenced Spain's greatest author – Miguel de Cervantes. Highlights include Oropesa's turreted castle, Sigüenza's medieval laneways and UNESCO-listed Cuenca, where 600-year-old houses hang from cliffs and galleries frame some of Spain's finest contemporary art. In between, there are whitewashed towns host to the country's greatest playhouses and national parks awash with birdlife. You'll explore it all with parador stays, ranging from idyllic country houses to 500-year-old convents.

**PRICES START FROM £505 PP** incl. flights, 8 days car hire & 7 nights B&B accommodation. Call **020 7838 5894** for more details.





# ...OR THE POUSADAS OF PORTUGAL

Not to be outdone, Portugal has its own collection of heritage hotels. From castles and palaces to fortresses and monasteries, there are over 40 pousada properties to choose from, spanning the length and breadth of the country. Perhaps you'd like to take in the sun-soaked beauty of the Algarve from a viscount's Rococo manor house, stay in a 12th-century medieval castle with spectacular sea views, or taste your way through Porto's famed wine cellars while luxuriating in a palatial national monument. Putting his best driving foot forward, Chris hops across the border to bring you two of his favourite routes, one taking in the country's historic heartlands, the other making the most of its idyllic southern coast.



## THE HEART OF PORTUGAL

EIGHT-DAY TAILOR-MADE SELF-DRIVE

Flying in and out of the Portuguese capital, this is a comprehensive appreciation of both Portugal's urbane charms and rural beauty. You'll begin with Lisbon, staying in a mansion that once belonged to the royal family, before turning inland to overnight in a medieval castle-monastery in Flor de Rosa, a quintessential Portuguese village. Then, it's south to spend the night in Estremoz's 14th-century castle before you dip into the Alentejo region. Enjoy hikes and wine tastings as you stay in a tranquil, 16th-century convent. Your last two nights will then be spent in a Moorish castle, exploring Roman ruins and enjoying some seaside relaxation.

**PRICES START FROM £335 PP** incl. flights, 8 days car hire & 7 nights B&B accommodation. Call **020 7838 5894** for more details.

## ALENTEJO AND THE ALGARVE

EIGHT-DAY TAILOR-MADE SELF-DRIVE

After a flight into Lisbon, you'll drive south to a stay in a Moorish castle, set among Alcácer do Sal's pretty beaches. Then, it's on to Arraiolos, an idyllic hilltop town built around your 16th-century pousada convent. Your next convent stop is in Vila Viçosa – an ideal launchpad for hikes and birdwatching – before a stay among whitewashed Beja's charming cobbled streets sees you on to a palm-fringed convent that dates to the 1200s. End in Sagres, a sleepy fishermen's town of lighthouses, sandy beaches and hilltop forts, before you fly out of Faro.

**PRICES START FROM £355 PP** incl. flights, 8 days car hire & 7 nights B&B accommodation. Call **020 7838 5894** for more details.





# Norway: Europe's most underrated road trip



Wexas Scandinavia expert *Maddie Eleini* recommends her favourite Norwegian self-drives.

## NORWAY: BEST OF THE WEST

6-DAY TAILOR-MADE SELF-DRIVE

Flying into Ålesund, you'll be welcomed to Norway's cragged western coast by a delightfully colourful aesthetic; the city was entirely rebuilt in Art Nouveau fashion following a 1904 fire. To take it all in, I highly recommend the walk up Mt. Aksla for a spectacular view of the town and its island frame. After a night here, you'll pick up your hire car to drive along the famous Trollstigen. As one of Norway's "national tourist routes" it's one of the most scenic stretches in the entire country, with lazy switchbacks bringing you between lush valleys, strawberry fields and vertiginous mountains. It's all showcased by architect-designed viewing platforms. You'll then be based out of the gorgeous Geirangerfjord, perfectly poised for everything from hikes and cruises to spectacular drives along Eagle's Road – a stunning mountain pass plied by hairpin turns. After four days to explore, you'll then return to Ålesund for a final night before your flight home.

**PRICES START FROM £845 PP** incl. flights, 5 nights accommodation & 4 days hire car. For a full itinerary, visit [wexas.com/103353](https://wexas.com/103353) or call **020 7838 5894**.





For many of my clients, Norwegian travel begins and ends with a coastal cruise or wintery escape. Yes, the Northern Lights are magical and, on page 74, you can read all about dipping in and out of the fjords aboard a Hurtigruten ship. However, the humble Norwegian road trip deserves so much more recognition. The roads are pristine and the routes simply spectacular, with rollercoasters knitting together fissured islands and precipitous sweeps bringing you alongside shimmering fjords. For me, the scenery really is right up there among Europe's most dramatic. What's more, it's all just a short flight away and just might cost less than you think, especially with our limited free car hire offer. So, to point you in the right direction, I've picked out two of my favourite itineraries.



## THE SOUTHERN FJORDS

8-DAY TAILOR-MADE SELF-DRIVE

This longer itinerary offers plenty of chance for some active exploration – something complemented by stays in spa hotels. It all begins in Stavanger, where you'll have two days to wander its cobblestone lanes, admiring 18th-century timber buildings and award-winning beaches. Otherwise, hike up to Pulpit Rock (pictured), or Kjeragbolten – a rock suspended high above the waters below. Although perfectly manageable on your own, I recommend booking a guide for a sunrise expedition that beats the crowds. You'll then head north, hopping between craggy islands on ferries, bridges and tunnels to arrive at Haugesund, perhaps pausing for waterfalls and beach walks along the way. Next up, a national tourist route will bring you on to Hardangerfjord, sidling along steep valleys and plunging through apple orchards. Troll's Tongue rock, the 182m-high Vøringsfossen and hiking or blue-ice kayaking at the Folgefonna Glacier are all special highlights. You'll even stay in a historic hotel whose sauna pool enjoys panoramic views over the fjord. Then, end in Bergen to take in its timber wharf and the fjord views from its funicular train before your flight home.

**PRICES START FROM £1,025 PP** incl. flights, 7 nights B&B accommodation & 6 days car hire. For a full itinerary, visit [wexas.com/103604](https://www.wexas.com/103604) or call **020 7838 5894**.





# OFF THE BEATEN TRACKS

Having travelled entire networks and stayed on the finest trains, our rail specialists have picked out their favourite luxury rail journeys, showcased over the next few pages. Climb with them into western Canada's snow-capped wilderness, summit Andean peaks aboard South America's first luxury train or head transcontinental with Australia's outback Ghan or Russia's Trans-Siberian – the world's longest rail journey.

It's all delivered with our specialists' first-hand insight. You'll learn what a night on the Orient Express is really like and how to choose between South Africa's luxury trains before Adam Hickmott puts together his ultimate Japanese rail journey. There's even a full distillation of the new routes offered by industry darling Golden Eagle, with highlights including a special anniversary departure and a chartered exploration of Switzerland's most spectacular railways. But, while the routes change, you can expect the same flawless service on all of our recommended routes, with gourmet dining, bar-car indulgences and Art-Deco elegance the default.

For further detail, head to [wexas.com/rail](https://wexas.com/rail) or order your complimentary Rail & Cruise brochure from [wexas.com/brochures](https://wexas.com/brochures).





# ALL ABOARD THE Venice Simplon-Orient-Express



Wexas rail expert *Lisa Ayling* recounts her journey from London to Venice aboard one of the world's most iconic trains.

London Victoria – the UK's second-busiest station – often isn't the most inspiring of places. But, when the Belmond British Pullman rolls in, it's an occasion. The carriages are resplendent in gleaming livery, interiors shine in polished darkwood and neat tablecloths recall a time more civilised. Even the most seasoned of commuters paused while suited stewards, all bright brass buttons and brighter smiles, escorted us from the private lounge to our seats.

Settling into my armchair while admiring the Art-Deco motifs and ornate mosaics, I had to pinch myself; I was in a carriage that was once part of Winston Churchill's funeral train. And, they've thought of everything, from the indulgent brunch paired with a Bellini cocktail to the brass-band welcome in Folkestone.

Then, after a race through the channel tunnel, we were welcomed aboard the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express by its staff, lined on the platform in their royal blue. Our personal carriage attendant – whose presence was always just a press of a button away – then escorted me to my private berth. It's important to note that this is, after all, a historic train. Expect exquisite oak panelling, lacy dollies and washbasins over en suites and WiFi mod cons.

But, this is all part of the charm. As I wandered along the train, everyone

had their cabin doors open, not just to take in the view from both sides but to imbibe the palpable sense of excitement. Then, after changing for dinner, we made our way down to the restaurant cars, where fresh ingredients from our route were served up among Lalique glasswork and black lacquerware. It was all capped off with a visit to the opulent bar car for a piano-accompanied cocktail before bed, our berth's plush settees having been replaced with crisp damask sheets.

We woke the next day to views of the Austrian Alps and breakfast in our cabin. With the tracks sweeping along green valley floors, there was plenty of time for window-gazing in between a three-course lunch and afternoon tea, served just before we crossed the Venetian Lagoon. It really was like living Downton Abbey.

## *Lisa's journey is available:*

**PRICES START FROM £2,430 PP** incl. return flight, private transfers, select meals & drinks, 1 night on the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express & 2 nights B&B accommodation in Venice. For a full, day-by-day itinerary, visit [wexas.com/101166](http://wexas.com/101166) or call **020 7838 5894**.



## LONDON TO PARIS

3-DAY LUXURY RAIL JOURNEY

This Parisian jaunt is perfect for an introductory taste of the world's most iconic train journey. You'll start, as before, aboard the Belmond British Pullman, taking in its Grecian inlays and the oriental carvings of the Queen Mother's favourite carriage. Then, with the Kent countryside – and a three-course brunch – behind you, you'll board the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express in Calais. While you won't stay the night, you will enjoy all the indulgent trappings of the restaurant and bar cars. Expect piano-backed cocktails and the likes of Brittany lobster and Mont St Michel lamb. Cap it all off with a two-night luxury stay in the French capital before a return Eurostar leg in Business Premier Class.

**PRICES START FROM £1,345 PP** incl. journey aboard the Belmond British Pullman & Venice Simplon-Orient-Express, select meals & drinks, 2 nights B&B accommodation in Paris & return Eurostar Business Premier journey. For a full, day-by-day itinerary, visit [wexas.com/149580](https://wexas.com/149580) or call **020 7838 5894**.



## LONDON TO ISTANBUL

9-DAY LUXURY RAIL JOURNEY

This is a truly special journey, not least because it only runs once a year. It maps the original, 19th-century route of the Orient Express, departing from London in Business-Premier style on the Eurostar before joining the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express in Paris. Then, sweeping through rural France, along Hungarian rivers and over Romanian mountains, it takes a gentle week to arrive in the Turkish capital. As well as three nights of opulent comfort on the train, you'll enjoy luxury stays in Paris, Budapest, Bucharest and Istanbul, with expert-led tours showcasing everything from Romania's fairytale castles to Hungary's medieval severity.

**PRICES START FROM £8,740 PP** incl. flight, transfers, 3 nights aboard the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express, 5 nights B&B accommodation, select drinks & dining, Business Premier Eurostar journey & select touring. For a full itinerary, visit [wexas.com/149232](https://wexas.com/149232) or call **020 7838 5894**.



## BUDAPEST TO LONDON

4-DAY LUXURY RAIL JOURNEY

If you'd rather another of Europe's city greats, look east. Your journey begins with a two-night spa stay in Budapest, taking in its neoclassical beauty, medieval castles and ornate palaces on an expert-led tour. There's then time for a soak in one of the city's grand thermal baths before you board the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express. Settle in with a glass of sparkling wine before a multi-course lunch and dinner, served among fine lacquerware and glasswork. Then, after a Continental breakfast served in the comfort of your cabin, you'll disembark for the channel tunnel and the Belmond British Pullman, bringing you to London in regal opulence.

**PRICES START FROM £2,905PP** incl. flight, private transfers, 1 night aboard Venice Simplon-Orient-Express, journey aboard Belmond British Pullman, select meals & drinks, 2 nights B&B accommodation & select touring. For a full itinerary, visit [wexas.com/103691](https://wexas.com/103691) or call **020 7838 5894**.



Seven-time winner of the ‘World’s Leading Travel Experience by Train’, Rocky Mountaineer offers Canada’s most luxurious rail journeys. Heading out from Vancouver, it runs a range of routes that bring you up into the Rockies, sweeping along rushing rivers, climbing along cragged ridges and hopping over mighty gorges on trestle bridges. It’s all brought to life by scenic slowdowns and the flawless hospitality of the onboard hosts. Expect fascinating insights into your route, an all-inclusive drinks service and gourmet dining from Michelin-trained chefs, all served up with that famous Canadian cheer. Think roasted salmon fillet for lunch and sourdough flapjacks for breakfast, dressed in cranberry maple cream, of course. Then, in between train jaunts, you’ll enjoy curated stays and unique excursions, from helicopter flights to glacier walks.

**SilverLeaf Service**

Although this is Rocky Mountaineer’s entry-level class, there’s certainly nothing basic about it. You’ll be greeted aboard your panoramic carriage with a welcome toast to the journey ahead before settling down to truly panoramic views, invited in by curved glass ceilings and oversized picture windows. It’s all washed down with indulgent dining, snacks and complimentary drinks – both



# ROCKY MOUNTAINEER

## North America’s greatest rail journeys

alcoholic and non-alcoholic. The impeccable service continues off the train, too, with portage included throughout your journey.

**GoldLeaf Service**

It’s the carriages themselves where GoldLeaf Service really differentiates itself. Split over two levels, passengers are treated to elevated views from wraparound

domes while an open-air observation deck is perfect for photographers. Then, alongside the free-flowing snacks and drinks, upgraded meals are taken downstairs, with highlights including berry parfait, merlot-braised ribs and seared Albacore tuna, served over a sautéed pepper and caper ragout. There are even morning scones and afternoon wine and cheeses.



## ROCKY MOUNTAINEER: CANADIAN ROCKIES HIGHLIGHTS

Wexas rail specialist *Alison Nicolle* reports back from the Rocky Mountaineer's signature journey – a weeklong itinerary that winds up through the Rockies to link Vancouver and Calgary.

We seem to be enjoying something of a second golden age of rail travel. Indeed, it's impossible to match the heritage of the Orient Express, the Trans-Siberian's epic journey or the unique exoticism of India's luxury trains. And, Rocky Mountaineer doesn't even try. Instead, it offers some of the world's most dramatic mountain scenery, much of which – from hidden waterfalls to snow-capped peaks – simply isn't otherwise accessible. It's a vital differentiation. After all, it's not competing against North America's rail journeys, but those around the globe.

My trip began in the crisp autumn sunshine of Vancouver. I've been before but there's something intangibly attractive about this most of Canadian cities. Perhaps it's something in the craft beer, but there's a reason it's often found topping lists of the world's most liveable places.

But, I was here for the train journey. After a night in a hotel catching

up on sleep, we were brought to Rocky Mountaineer's exclusive station, its private lounge buzzing with anticipation. Then, boarding to a bagpipe fanfare, I was quickly settled in with a glass of fizz as the train pulled off. The city limits faded quickly and we were soon among the Canadian wilds, with dense forests and river canyons providing the backdrop. Although it's a long day on the train, between the delectable meals and, yes, free-pour drinks, it truly sped by and soon we were rolling into Kamloops. I even managed to spot a pair of mountain goats as we skirted its lake.

Reboarding the train the next day, I got a taste of the SilverLeaf Service. To be candid, if I hadn't experienced GoldLeaf Service the day before, I'd have been sure that these were the premium carriages. The service and standard of dining were just as good, but I did miss the open-air observation car and

split-level restaurant carriage, which added to the occasion. However, if anything, the scenery was even more impressive today, as we climbed higher into the Rockies.

Disembarking for a night on Lake Louise, we were then treated to two days of off-train touring. Highlights included a spectacular cable-car ride over Banff National Park, an off-road expedition onto the mighty Athabasca Glacier and stays in timber-lodge hotels, complete with rooftop Jacuzzis and hot-tub views of roaming elk. However, it was a stop at Peyto Lake that really took my breath away, its waters turned an impossible shade of blue by the glacial melt.

Finally, ending in Calgary, I had some time to reflect on the journey behind me. I could only conclude that Rocky Mountaineer really does deserve its place in the canon of the world's greatest rail journeys.

**PRICES START FROM £2,740 PP**  
Incl. flights, train journeys in SilverLeaf Service, 5 nights accommodation & select meals, drinks & touring. For a full itinerary, visit [wexas.com/103892](https://wexas.com/103892) or call **020 7838 5894**.

### GRAND CIRCLE TOUR

Extend your trip with our Grand Circle Tour, taking a more leisurely fortnight to loop back to Vancouver via Jasper and Whistler.

Visit [wexas.com/144047](https://wexas.com/144047) for a full itinerary, or call **020 7838 5894**.



## THE GOLDEN EAGLE

### Life onboard

The Golden Eagle – just the name conjures images of listening to a Tchaikovsky recital, played out on a baby grand as Russia’s wilderness slips by. Indeed, you’ll be welcomed aboard by a piano-accompanied glass of champagne, served among the darkwood grandeur of the bar car – the venue for afternoon teas and expert lectures. The restaurant carriage is equally delightful, with full-board menus of made-to-order breakfasts and dinners of salmon caviar all washed down with included drinks. Then, come the evening, retire to your cosy en-suite cabin where plush sofas convert to both an upper berth and a small double bed. And, while all feature LCD screens and a 24-hour service from personal attendants, upgrades mix in extra space, underfloor heating and a complimentary bar service. The wood-panelled Imperial Suites are a special highlight.

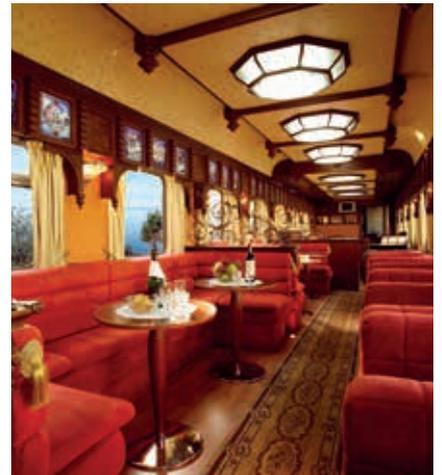
### Routes

The Golden Eagle’s iconic offering is, of course, its **Trans-Siberian route (from £13,910 PP)**. Taking 6,500 miles and 16 days, it traces soaring mountains, great Mongolian plains and Siberia’s wild expanse to sweep between Moscow and Vladivostok. And, throughout, you’ll stop for unique excursions, from yurt visits and champagne-reception concerts to stops at frontier Tsarist towns. There’s also the option of



# Where Eagles

the shorter **14-day Trans-Mongolian Express (from £13,750 PP)**, which follows the same route but finishes earlier in Ulaanbaatar. But, for something entirely different, look to the **21-day Silk Road journey (from £12,305 PP)**. Next departing in April 2019, it begins in Beijing aboard China’s most-luxurious private train before swapping back to the Golden Eagle to travel through the ‘Stans and on to Moscow. Expect Xian’s Terracotta Warriors, Gobi-Desert camel rides, Central-Asian exoticism and Soviet severity.



## CAUCASIAN VI

15-DAY LUXURY RAIL JOURNEY

Running only once every five years, this unique, steam-powered journey traces the original route of the Golden Eagle, looping out of Moscow and into southwest Russia. As you head down the Caucasus Range and along the Black Sea, you’ll venture well off the beaten track to uncover once-closed Soviet cities, mountain railways and revolutionary sites. **Prices start from £10,275 PP.**

All prices quoted include flights, transfers, full-board dining, drinks with meals, all touring & hotel stays. For more information, visit [wexas.com/103266](http://wexas.com/103266) or call **020 7838 5894**.





important bar carriages – replete with pianos – and restaurant cars, where inclusive gourmet meals are taken with complimentary drinks.

It's all knitted together by stays in luxury hotels and a full suite of included touring, from winery lunches to glacier walks. In fact, that's the real joy of this journey. Between private charters, portage and expert-led excursions, this unique route simply wouldn't otherwise be possible.

It begins with a night in the St. Pancras Renaissance Hotel – a true London landmark – before a Business-Premier Eurostar hop sees you on to a night in Paris, including dinner beneath the frescoes of Gare de Lyon's Le Train Bleu. Then, following a TGV sprint down to Basel, you'll start your Swiss adventure. With stays in Zurich, aristocratic St. Moritz, valley-ringed Andermatt and Victorian-era Interlaken, you'll wind through the entire country. In between zigzagging up high mountain passes and hopping over rushing rivers on trestle bridges, you'll stop for hidden waterfalls, paddle-steamer cruises and horse-and-carriage rides. Your route will even bring you right under the colossal Rhône Glacier. They weren't lying – this really is the Swiss railways at their absolute best.

**THIS 12-DAY LUXURY RAIL JOURNEY STARTS FROM £12,885 PP** incl. flight, all rail travel, 11 nights accommodation, selected dining and all drinks with meals. For a full, day-by-day itinerary, visit [wexas.com/149743](https://www.wexas.com/149743) or call **020 7838 5894**.

# Fly

## SWISS RAIL SPECTACULAR

From the same people behind the Golden Eagle, there's a brand-new route available, billed as the "ultimate rail tour of Switzerland". But, instead of travelling on the iconic train itself, you'll dart along flower-filled valleys and summit Alpine peaks aboard everything from funiculars and chartered steam trains to narrow-gauge mountain railways and the ultra-modern Glacier Express. However, most of your travel will be aboard the Prestige Continental Express or the 1930s Glacier & Bernina Pullman Express. Expect rich upholstery, wood inlay and brass detailing that recalls all the grandeur of the golden age of rail travel. There are also those all-





# The ultimate Japanese rail journey



Wexas Asia specialist **Adam Hickmott**  
picks out his favourite Japanese train routes.

In 2012 – the year of the Japanese tsunami – the average delay of the bullet train was just 36 seconds. Just last month, I turned on the six o'clock news to a story, simply titled: “Apology after Japanese train departs 20 seconds early”. But, it’s not just the ruthless efficiency that makes the Japanese rail network so appealing. On Shikoku, express trains pass hilltop shrines and ancient burial grounds, while main-island Honshu sees routes skirt dramatic coastlines, wind through the Japanese Alps and circumnavigate great lakes. What’s more, rail travel is not only often the quickest way to travel, but also the most affordable. To help guide you, I’ve put together the following itinerary, knitting together secret gems and Japan’s famous highlights with some of its most scenic train trips.

## Cultural Highlights of Japan by Rail

It all begins in Tokyo. While you’ll stay next to historic gardens, we’ll include a pre-loaded transport card so you can get started on your rail journey early and explore the capital. A private guide will also tailor a full-day tour of the city to your interests. There’s everything from Akihabara’s neon and Shinjuku’s skyscrapers to hole-in-the-wall ramen joints and the Shinto shrines of Yoyogi Park. You’ll even enjoy entrance to the world’s tallest tower – the Tokyo Skytree.

It’s then time for your first bullet-train sprint, whipping you between Mt. Fuji and the coast to arrive at Kyoto. Here, we’ve arranged for you to be greeted by a private tea ceremony, your guide educating you on the tradition’s ancient Buddhist principles. You’ll also contrast the sleek style of your luxury hotel with Kyoto’s rich heritage, enjoying a personalised private tour. Choose from 17 UNESCO-listed treasures, 400 Shinto shrines and 1,600 Buddhist temples as you dip between bamboo groves and Imperial-Palace gardens. I’d then recommend making further use of your rail pass with a day trip to Nara. It’s where Buddhism first made land in Japan; something evidenced by



the city's grand monasteries and terraced temples.

Back on the Shinkansen, you'll next skirt Honshu's southern coast to Okayama where you'll change onto an express train, heading inland to Matsue. Set between twin lagoons and a maze of waterways, this prefectural capital welcomes with spectacular sunsets and an imposingly tiered 17th-century castle. You'll have two days to explore; Matsue even features one of the country's finest gardens, all spindly bonsais and raked gravel swathes. At day's end you'll retire to your traditional *ryokan* inn where timber rooms, hot-spring soaks and included dinners of local delicacies recall Japan's quieter past.

Your next scenic train ride follows the coast down to Hagi. A quiet seaside town, its old castle centre has changed little since the feudal

era. It's said that you can still navigate its white-walled streets and orange-tree gardens using Edo-Period maps. Then, after visiting its samurai residences, merchant houses and carp-filled moat, you'll also taste the region's culinary heritage with a pair of included dinners.

Back on the rails, you'll head inland, swapping coasts to arrive at Hiroshima. Although the events of 6 August 1945 are memorialised in hauntingly beautiful dome ruins and the superb Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, the city's wide, leafy avenues are built anew, vibrant with art museums and teahouse-dotted gardens. It's all showcased on your private guided tour, again tailor-made to your interests. I'd also point you towards next-door Miyajima, the island of floating shrines whose temple-capped mountain offers stunning

archipelago views. The floor-to-ceiling panoramas of Hiroshima from your hotel aren't bad, either.

From Hiroshima, head east on the Shinkansen to Okayama where you'll change to a local line to reach Kurashiki. A key intermediary in the Edo-Period rice trade, its canals are lined with 18th-century storehouses – one of which will be your *ryokan* home for the next two nights. Here, you'll enjoy *kaiseki* multi-course feasts and long soaks in onsen baths. Stepping out of your front door, you'll be able to follow the willow-lined waterways to merchant houses that have been converted into everything from archaeological museums to art galleries. I also highly recommend a trip to Okayama's gardens and jet-black castle.

Retracing your railway route, you'll spend your last day in Osaka – Japan's third largest city. Here, neon signs cover whole buildings and giant Ferris wheels perch atop department stores. Remember to also take some time to navigate the doubled moat of Osaka Castle and summit one of the city's ultra-modern skyscrapers before your flight home.

#### ADAM'S JOURNEY IS AVAILABLE FROM £5,190 PP

Incl. flights, private transfers, 14 nights accommodation on a mix of B&B & half-board basis, 14-day rail pass, Tokyo Skytree entrance, tea ceremony, & private touring in Tokyo, Kyoto, Hiroshima & Miyajima. For a full itinerary, visit [wexas.com/142661](http://wexas.com/142661) or call 020 7838 5894.





# The Ghan: a journey of wilderness and luxury

Australia's history is one of transcontinental pioneers. But, although the country's railway heritage dates back to the 19th century, it wasn't until 2004 that a north-south route was established between Darwin and Adelaide, roughly tracing the route of the original cameleers. It's a journey that knits together remote frontier towns, sweeping through an endless wilderness of undulating ochre. You can take it all in today on one of the world's most luxurious trains – the Ghan – stopping off en route for a full range of included excursions.

#### **Drinks and Dining**

Fostering a relaxed, club-like atmosphere, both Gold and Platinum



## THE GHAN AND KANGAROO ISLAND

12-DAY LUXURY RAIL JOURNEY

This is the train's original routing, taking three ultra-scenic days to wend almost 3,000km from Darwin to Adelaide, sweeping through the deserts of the Red Centre. Stops include lazy cruises along the Katherine River, visits to the Jawoyn Aborigines for spear-throwing and basket-weaving, and a chance to explore the frontier town of Alice Springs. You'll even take in the spectacular outback stars in remote Manguri. Either side, we've included some time to relax in tropical Darwin and explore the church spires of historic Adelaide. You'll then finish with a stay on Kangaroo Island, spotting everything from sea lions to koalas and, yes, kangaroos.

**PRICES FROM £3,550 PP** incl. flights, transfers, 2 nights all-inclusive aboard the Ghan, 7 nights accommodation & selected meals & touring. For a full itinerary, visit [wexas.com/138401](http://wexas.com/138401) or call **020 7838 58984**.

Service passengers are treated to an all-inclusive spread of drinks and fine dining. In the Queen Adelaide Restaurant car, indulgent multi-course menus showcase the best ingredients along the train's route, from kangaroo to Top End barramundi. It's all accompanied by complimentary beers, spirits and fine Australian wines, best enjoyed with the convivial ambience of the Outback Explorer Lounge.

### Gold Service

Settling in among the wood-panelled fineries of your private berth, you'll be treated to spectacular views of the rushing outback from picture windows – scenes brought to life by optional audio commentary. Then,



after a day's exploring, freshen up in your en suite before retiring to cosy upper and lower berths, cleverly converted from a three-seater lounge. Alongside the single option, you can also upgrade to a ¾ size

double bed, complete with TV and DVD player.

### Platinum Service

By day, Platinum cabins are configured into a private lounge – host to a table and pair of ottomans – and by night they're transformed into a luxurious bedroom, with either double or twin beds. Along with the refreshments and gourmet breakfasts served in your cabin, guests are also welcomed to the Platinum Club. Here, gourmet dining, premium drinks and endless vistas are served up to an exclusive lounge and leather banquette seating. It's all dressed in timber accents, brass fittings and quartzite tabletops.

## THE GHAN EXPEDITION

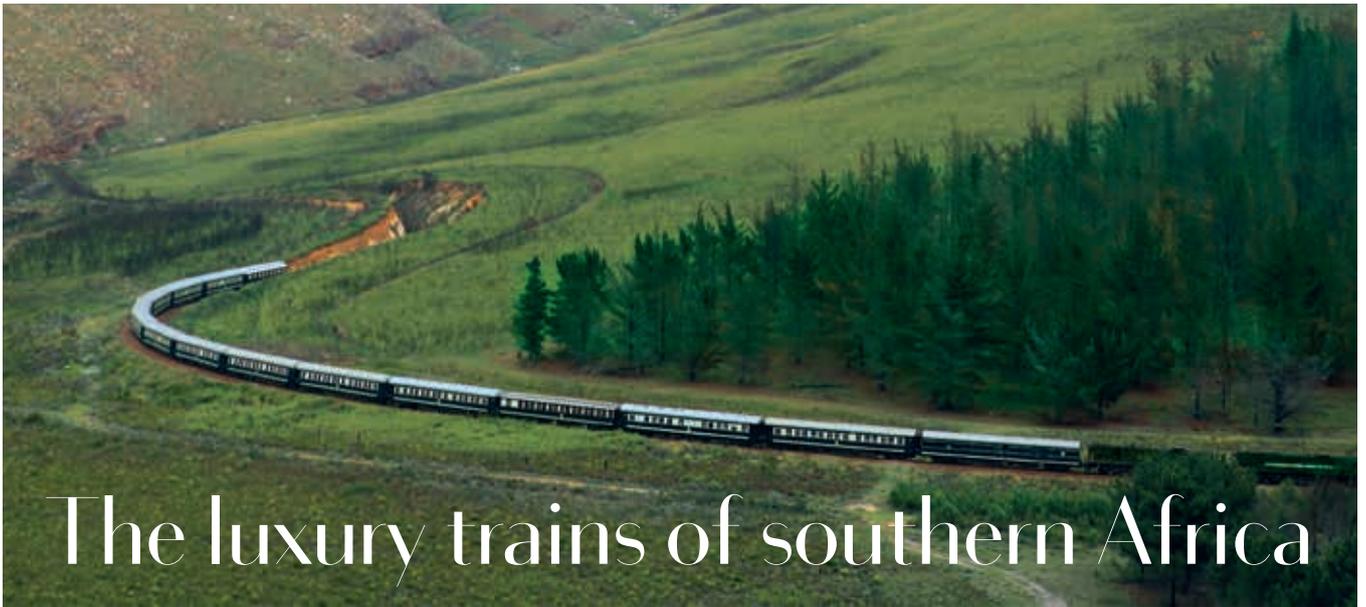
15-DAY LUXURY RAIL JOURNEY

While the Ghan Expedition travels the same route as its classic counterpart, it takes an extra day to really immerse you in the outback's vast expanse. You'll stop off along the way for barbecue dinners in the desert and middle-of-nowhere Coober Perdy – a unique underground mining town where you'll visit subterranean churches and enjoy a gourmet lunch in its eerie tunnels. You'll also pause at a remote cattle station for horse-breaking and cattle-dog demonstrations along with traditional live music. We've also upgraded your time either side, with an all-inclusive safari in the Kakadu wetlands and a wine-tasting stay in the Barossa Valley.

**PRICES FROM £6,870 PP** incl. flights, transfers, 3 nights all-inclusive aboard the Ghan, 6 nights B&B accommodation, 2-night all-inclusive package at Bamurru Plains, 4 days car hire & select meals & touring. For a full itinerary, visit [wexas.com/147498](http://wexas.com/147498) or call **020 7838 5894**.



EARLY BIRD OFFER  
20% OFF  
THE GHAN  
Book by 31 March 18



# The luxury trains of southern Africa

Not only do the luxury trains of South Africa offer a perfect alternative to a flight or long drive, but they represent the chance to step back to the golden age of rail travel.

## THE BLUE TRAIN

Having begun life in the 1920s, the Blue Train is South Africa’s oldest-running luxury rail service. It’s a unique heritage carried on to this day, with private berths dressed in polished wood panelling, marble-and-gold en suites and goose-down beds, available as doubles or twins. Upgrades even feature a butler service and soaking bathtubs. It’s an elegant aesthetic that continues into the train’s pair of lounges, where afternoon tea and fine South African sherries are served up to picture-window views. However, it’s the dining that impresses most, with five-course banquets spanning from Karoo lamb to Knysna oysters. It’s all informed by the train’s route – an overnight journey between Pretoria to Cape Town with stops for expert-led excursions. Expect wine tastings, pauses at pretty colonial towns and diamond-rush landscapes. It really is superb value.

### A 15-DAY JOURNEY STARTS FROM £4,175 PP

Incl. flights, private transfers, 1 night full-board on the Blue Train, 4 nights full-board safari with twice-daily game drives, & 7 nights B&B accommodation in Cape Town, Pretoria & the Winelands. For more information, visit [wexas.com/104109](http://wexas.com/104109) or call **020 7838 5894**.

## ROVOS RAIL

If you’re looking for a step up, Rovos Rail is Africa’s most luxurious train. The Edwardian dining cars feature button-leather seats, the lounge car hosts wingback chairs and the berths are immaculate in darkwood elegance, complete with tiled en suites and a mini-bar stocked with beverages of your choosing. The Royal Suites are particularly extravagant, taking up half a carriage each and home to rolltop baths and a private lounge packed full of period furnishings. Of course, you can also expect only the finest in regional dining, paired, of course, with the best South African wines. In terms of routes, Rovos Rail slows things down, taking two nights to wind between Cape Town and Pretoria. You’ll therefore have more time both on the train and on excursions. For something extra special, there’s even the option for journeys up to Victoria Falls, Namibia and Tanzania’s Dar es Salaam.

### A 13-DAY JOURNEY STARTS FROM £5,240 PP

Incl. flights, private transfers, 2 nights full-board on Rovos Rail, 4 nights all-inclusive Kruger safari with twice-daily game drives, & 8 nights B&B accommodation in Cape Town & Pretoria. For more information, visit [wexas.com/102182](http://wexas.com/102182) or call **020 7838 5894**.



SAVE UP TO  
£135 PP  
Book by 31 January 18



SAVE UP TO  
£150 PP  
Book by 31 January 18



# BELMOND ANDEAN EXPLORER



## A journey like no other

A land of ancient civilisations and mist-shrouded Andean peaks, Peru is truly spectacular. And, what better way to explore its rich variety of landscapes and cultures than with Belmond, whose luxury travel collection ranges from country-spanning rail journeys to sophisticated lodges far off the beaten track.

On our featured 13-day tour, you'll showcase Peru's diverse delights with expert-led private tours, exclusive stays and the continent's most luxurious rail journey – the Belmond Andean Explorer. After

a day taking in Lima's European charm, you'll fly down to the Sacred Valley to compare its indigenous villages to nearby Machu Picchu's mist-shrouded secrets and Cusco's treasures both Incan and Spanish.

Then, departing Cusco, your indulgent mountain rail trip, complete with wine-paired fine dining, will see you link remote temple ruins and a cruise among Lake Titicaca's floating villages. Finally, arrive in Arequipa, a city hewn from white rock, and the gateway to the soaring condors and savage peaks of Colca Canyon.

### PRICES START FROM £5,995 PP

Incl. flights, private transfers, 9 nights accommodation, 2 nights full-board on the Belmond Andean Explorer, select meals and private touring. For a full itinerary, visit [wexas.com/146102](http://wexas.com/146102) or call 020 7838 5894.



## THE BELMOND ANDEAN EXPLORER

South America's first luxury train combines unique daytime exploration with included fine dining and stylish, Peruvian-inspired sleeping accommodation. That's all while traversing the snow-capped peaks and lush valleys of the Andes. Travelling along one of the world's highest rail routes, the train passes through remote towns and cities rich in history, culture and architectural splendour on its journey between Cusco, Lake Titicaca and Arequipa. And, from mid-2018, there will even be an onboard spa car – the perfect place to relax after busy days of high-altitude adventure. With a selection of one- and two-night trips, it's surely the finest way to explore Peru's natural wonders and ancient kingdoms.



# HOTELS TO HANG YOUR HAT ON

Sometimes a hotel is just a place to rest your head. But, on a luxury holiday, we know that they can form a crucial part of your experience. That's why we only recommend accommodation that our destination experts have inspected and stayed in, ensuring they're up to your exacting standards. Over the following pages, we've picked out a few of our favourites.

In a destination as chaotically vibrant as India, it pays to have a slice of calm. That's why, on pages 44–45, Wexas specialist Krishna Ghosh has put together a curated selection of the country's finest properties. There's everything from a floating palace to a white-sand Goan resort. Similarly, in Chile, its luxury lodges offer a touch of indulgence among the country's sublime wildernesses. Sip sommelier-chosen vintages in the Atacama Desert, look out over Patagonian peaks from an infinity pool and return from wetland hikes to a full complement of spa treatments. Then, opposite, we've got the latest and greatest in hotels for 2018.





# NEW FOR 2018

From floating spa retreats to private-island getaways, this is a rundown of what's new in the hotel world for 2018.



## RAFFLES SINGAPORE

Since the original Raffles Hotel opened its doors in 1887 as a ten-room beach house, it's grown into a Singaporean icon. Once the first hotel in the region to have electric lights, today, Raffles is a colonial jewel, all white colonnades and lacy filigree. Having been closed since February 2017, it's set to reopen in the latter half of 2018, bringing fresh shine to its chandeliers, dark-wood billiards room and award-winning spa. And yes, you'll still be able to get that Singapore sling.



## ARCTIC BATH, SWEDISH LAPLAND

Between ice hotels and design classics, Scandinavia has something of a track record for innovation. Now, in the depths of Swedish Lapland, the people behind the Treehotel have dreamt up the Arctic Bath – a giant bird's nest perched atop a remote river, floating in summer and icebound in winter. As the name suggests, it promises everything from saunas to spa treatments – the perfect antidote to days spent exploring the Lappish wilderness.

## RETREAT AT THE BLUE LAGOON

Positioned right on the otherworldly waters of the Blue Lagoon, this designer retreat is set to offer exclusive, private access to one of Iceland's national treasures. And, the lagoon's healing properties are invited in with an impressive spa; there's everything from lava-rock steam rooms to in-water massages. It's all dressed in flawlessly contemporary chic, offering floor-to-ceiling views whether you're relaxing in your suite or indulging in the innovative restaurant.



## FOUR SEASONS DESROCHES

To coincide with the new non-stop British Airways flights to the Seychelles, from early 2018 you'll be able to cast yourself away to a private island wrapped up in signature Four Seasons luxe. Expect world-class diving and nine miles of soft white sand paired with Mediterranean dining, spa treatments and vintage villas, complete with outdoor showers and private pools.



To find out more about any of these properties, call **020 7838 5894**





# Chile rising

With Chile being widely tipped as one of the success stories of 2018, *Wexas Travel's Rachel Mostyn* casts her expert eye over a country that's making serious waves on the travel scene.

If you'll pardon the pun, Chile is hot. Having just returned from my latest visit, I completely understand why *Lonely Planet* has named it *the* top destination to visit in 2018. It's a country of huge diversity, immersive culture and a spectacular natural world that rivals more established long-haul favourites like Australia and New Zealand. Just like its Antipodean cousins, Chile has also become something of a posterchild for luxury and boutique hotels – detailed fully overleaf. And, now combined with the first-ever non-stop flights from the UK, this slimmest of countries has become a top choice for travellers looking for an experiential holiday that doesn't compromise on comfort.

But, despite measuring just 40 miles at its narrowest, Chile is a country of enormous cultural breadth. One moment you could be taking in the colonial charms of Santiago or the floating houses of mysterious Chiloé Island and the next sampling the world-class wines of the Colchagua Valley or the colourful laneways of seaside Valparaíso – a bohemian clifftop tumble.

It's all predicated on an endless geographic diversity. Bound by the spine of the Andes to the east and the vast Pacific Ocean to the west, the world's longest country stretches nearly 3,000 miles, right down to the very foot of the continent. In between, there's everything from the otherworldly landscapes of the Atacama Desert to the shimmering blue of its bucolic Lake District, where snow-capped peaks are reflected in glassy waters. Then, flung out into the Pacific, there's Easter Island where giant stone *moai* statues gaze enigmatically out to sea.

However, it's Patagonia that lingers longest in my memory. Just hearing its name conjures up images of mighty fjords, colossal glaciers and the magnificent spires of Torres del Paine National Park. Stretching all the way from the central Lake District to the wilds of Tierra del Fuego, it's a land of adventure where condors soar and guanacos roam free. Whisper it, but as one of the last true frontiers, Chile's dramatic tip puts it right up there with the finest experiences in world travel.



# The luxury lodges of Chile

## TIERRA HOTELS



Perhaps inspired by its Andean peaks, Chile aims high. In contrast to its wildly inhospitable landscapes, the country features some of the world’s finest luxury lodges. Think daringly modernist icons that serve up a fully inclusive spread of fine dining, finer wines and unique activities. To help give you some direction, Wexas Travel’s *Rachel Mostyn* picks out three of the country’s best offerings.

### Tierra Atacama



A personal favourite, Tierra Atacama is a slice of ultra-contemporary luxury that overlooks the majestic Licancabur Volcano. It’s a view best taken at sunset, with a drink by one of the cosy fire pits. Indeed, once you’ve returned from exploring the region’s hot springs, erupting geysers, cactus-roofed villages and emerald lakes, you’ll be treated to a whole host of luxurious indulgences. Soothe any horse-riding or volcano-climbing aches in the spa or simply pick out a good book from the library and unwind by the garden-ringed pool. Then, after tasting your way through the sommelier-paired menus, retire to your chic room; each features a private terrace and outdoor shower to make the most of those gorgeous views.



### Tierra Chiloé



It seems fitting that Tierra’s newest property is sited on Chiloé Island – a rising star of Chilean tourism itself that’s become famous for its stilted over-water buildings. And, this sense of bucolic charm is invited right into the Tierra Chiloé, with its gourmet dining informed by the island’s fresh produce and its sweeping timber architecture by the UNESCO-listed wooden churches. Then, in between relaxing with spa treatments and your room’s spectacular wetland views, the included excursions showcase the best of this unique destination. Along with biking, hiking or horseback riding, the hotel’s private boat is a special highlight, bringing you out among the archipelago’s wild coasts and secluded beaches.



SAVE UP TO  
£620 PP  
Book by 31 January 18

## SPIRIT OF CHILE WITH TIERRA HOTELS

14-DAY TAILOR-MADE JOURNEY

To showcase these fine properties, I've designed a curated itinerary around them, offering the chance to take in Chile's wild highlights in utter luxury. You'll begin and end in the country's enthralling capital, Santiago, enjoying its leafy, colonial charm before heading out into Chile's remotes. With domestic flights and transfers included throughout, you'll hop between the lunar landscapes of the world's driest desert, the World-Heritage charm of Chiloé Island and the creaking glaciers of Patagonia. And, with all-inclusive stays in Tierra properties, you'll be treated to the finest in Chilean wining and dining, along with a series of expert-led excursions. There's everything from horse rides through the Patagonian pampas to 4WD wildlife safaris in the Atacama and boat cruises among Chiloé's stilted villages. There's even the chance to trek among the storied peaks of Torres del Paine National Park.

**PRICES FROM £6,285 PP** incl. UK airport lounge, flights, transfers, touring, 8 nights all-inclusive accommodation with open-bar concept & 3 nights B&B accommodation. For more information and a full itinerary, visit [wexas.com/104175](http://wexas.com/104175) or call **020 7838 5894**.

### Tierra Patagonia

Perched on the edge of Lake Sarmiento, Tierra Patagonia looks right out onto the great peaks of Torres del Paine – the region's national-park icon. It's a truly privileged view showcased everywhere from the spa and infinity pool – the region's finest – to the all-timber rooms and what has to be one of the most spectacular lounges in all of Latin America. Here, giant views of the Paine Massif are served up alongside mixologist cocktails and Tierra's signature dining indulgences. Its open-plan layout also fosters a fantastic early-evening buzz, with guests sharing stories of the day's adventures, whether they're by mountain bike, foot or horseback.





## The Taj Mahal Hotel, New Delhi

Set among tropical gardens and fronted by a truly impressive pool, the Taj Mahal Hotel, New Delhi, is an oasis of calm amid the chaos of India’s vibrant capital. Indeed, it’s perfectly positioned among the leafy boulevards of prestigious Lutyens’ Delhi, with India Gate, the Presidential Palace and the National Museum all within easy reach. Blending contemporary comfort with old-world charm, rooms feature stunning aerial views of the city’s skyline. In turn, upgrades mix in butler service and club access, which confers a full spread of complimentary extras, from afternoon tea and welcome drinks to evening cocktails and hors d’oeuvres. In fact, it’s perhaps the dining where this hotel really shines, with highlights including gourmet Indian delicacies, award-winning Japanese cuisine and the spectacular rooftop views of the Grill Room. Then, after all this indulgence, relax in the spa’s sauna and Jacuzzis, or burn off the calories at the state-of-the-art fitness centre.



# India’s Landmark



From idyllic beach resorts and rustic-chic safari lodges to authentic Rajput palaces and world-renowned landmarks, Taj offers a truly unique collection of experiential hotels. However, while each is deeply rooted in its local heritage, they all share the same passion for world-class service, whether that’s enjoying some of India’s finest food, taking afternoon tea in a grand ballroom, or simply browsing the complimentary newspaper delivered to your door. And, while there are over 100 Taj properties to choose from, Wexas India specialist, *Krishna Ghosh*, has picked out three of her favourites.



## Taj Lake Palace, Udaipur

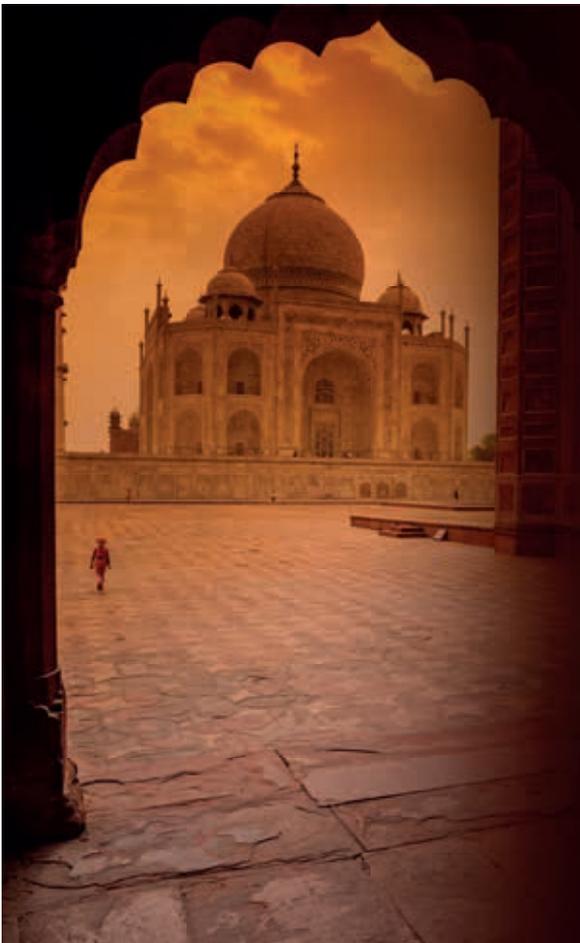
Surrounded on all sides by the sparkling, millpond-still waters of Lake Pichola, the Taj Lake Palace has a setting straight out of the movies. Indeed, its marbled pillars and ornate glasswork have played a starring role in both James Bond’s *Octopussy* and *The Jewel in the Crown*. And, it all looks back across Udaipur’s storied cityscape, where ornate temples and grand lakeside palaces sit alongside bustling markets and haveli-filled laneways, reached by a lazing boat ride. Rooms feature richly patterned fabrics and delicate frescoes while suites offer the likes of panoramic lake views and a 24-hour butler service. The dining is equally impressive, with everything from multi-course Indian banquets to European classics served to rooftop views. And, although the Jacuzzi, sauna and fitness centre all stand out, it’s experiences such as heritage walks, astrologer sessions and the ever-so-indulgent Jiva Spa that make this a truly special place to stay.



## Taj Exotica Resort & Spa, Goa

White sand, infectious spirituality and a mesmerising blend of Indic sensibilities and Portuguese heritage – there's nowhere else quite like Goa. And, tucked away among 56 acres of lush greenery on the state's pristine southwest coast, the Taj Exotica Resort & Spa enjoys a sense of quiet seclusion, wrapped up in old-world architecture, flower-lined patios and pillarless banquet halls. But, the relaxation isn't just limited to the resort's golden slice of beach, with everything from yoga and meditation classes to a full suite of spa therapies available. For something more active, there's badminton, tennis, a selection of watersports, a golf course and, this being India, a cricket ground. At the end of it all, you'll retire to the quiet sanctuary of your luxury accommodation, with the choice of sea-view rooms or garden villas, complete with soaking tubs, pillow menus, crisp linens and soothing colours. Your private verandah – or the beach itself – is the perfect spot to enjoy an intimate dinner of just-caught seafood.

# Hotels



You can easily combine stays at these and other Taj hotels with our journey through royal Rajasthan – a region of glittering palaces, shimmering lakes, battle-scarred ramparts and storybook forts. Its cities, all riotous pinks and dazzling blues, are a showcase for India's liveliest bazaars, where turbaned traders deal in everything from camels and cattle to handicrafts and spices. And, in the countryside, centuries-old customs live on in remote tribal villages. You'll experience it all as you travel from the capital, Delhi, via Agra's white-marble icon to the royal cities of Jaipur, Jodhpur and Udaipur, staying at a selection of luxurious Taj hotels. Three of which – Rambagh Palace, Jaipur; Umaid Bhawan Palace, Jodhpur; and Taj Lake Palace, Udaipur – are the former homes of Rajasthan royalty. You might even choose to extend your stay with a week at the Taj Exotica on Goa's golden sands.

**PRICES FROM £3,760 PP** incl. UK airport lounge, flights, private transfers, 10 nights B&B accommodation & private touring throughout. For more information and a full itinerary, visit [wexas.com/145911](http://wexas.com/145911) or call **020 7838 5894**.

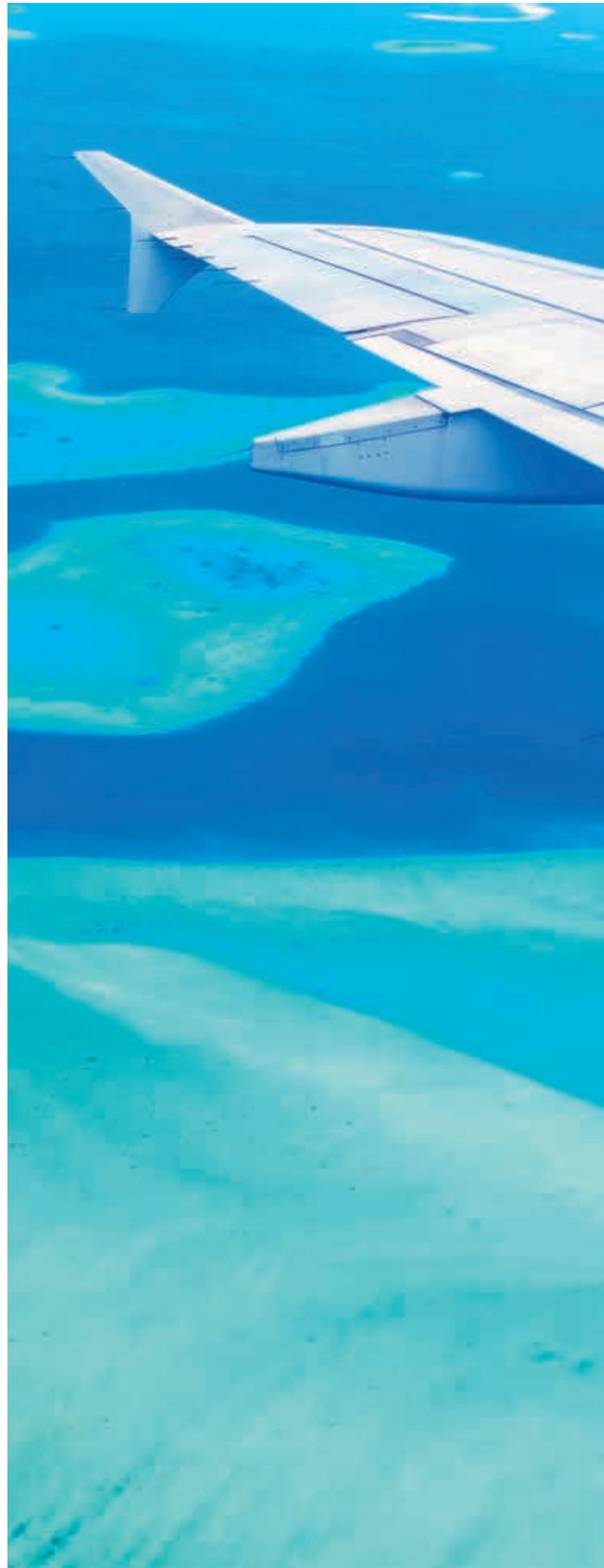
*A journey through Rajasthan*



# UP, UP & AWAY

It's a point self-evident that when flight routes open up, travel trends follow. So, over the next few pages, we take a look at what's new in the aviation industry and what it means for the world of travel. We begin opposite, examining the impact of British Airways' 2016 introduction of a non-stop service to Costa Rica, before looking ahead to Qatar Airways' new route to northern Thailand. It promises to open up some exciting twin-centre options. Then, back with the British flag carrier, there are also new non-stop flights to the Seychelles and Nashville. The latter is particularly enticing, ideal for a Deep South road trip ending in New Orleans.

However, it's perhaps Qantas's flight to Perth that really grabs the headlines. It's the world's first non-stop commercial service between the UK and Australia, promising to slash journey times. To celebrate, we've put together an alluring Western Australia itinerary, packing it full of scenic drives, award-winning wineries and vibrant cities.





# Costa Rica: the wild life

Since British Airways launched its first non-stop service to Costa Rica back in May 2016, we've seen a definite uptake in interest in this Central American jewel. However, it still doesn't get anywhere near the attention it deserves; travel trends have a lag time behind new routes opening up. It's not hard to find a surf beach of one's own, over half of the country is still given over to forest and there's a culturally ingrained love of *pura vida* – the pure life. It really is the right time to visit. Yet, it's the wildlife that really benefits. With over half a million species to spot, Costa Rica is one of the world's most biodiverse countries. So, here's your destination guide to its creatures and critters, and where to spot them.

## San José

Although only a day flight away from London, even San José – the Costa Rican capital – offers unique wildlife experiences. Of course, you'll have to move out from its colonial centre and into its spectacular mountain frame. Here, among the coffee plantations, walking trails lead between hummingbird gardens and butterfly observatories.

## Tortuguero National Park

The coastal rainforest of Tortuguero is threaded by a maze of canals,

swamps and waterways. As such, between guided hikes and boat rides, you'll be able to spot everything from sloths and iguanas to monkeys, crocs and jaguar. Then, between July and October, it's possible to watch turtles nesting on the park's quiet Caribbean beaches.

## Arenal Volcano National Park

A Costa Rican icon, the Arenal Volcano rises as a great peaking cone above the rainforest canopy. After you've headed out in search

of deer, coati raccoons and the resplendent quetzal, be sure to also try your hand at the high-adrenaline activities on offer. The rafting and zip-lining are particular highlights.

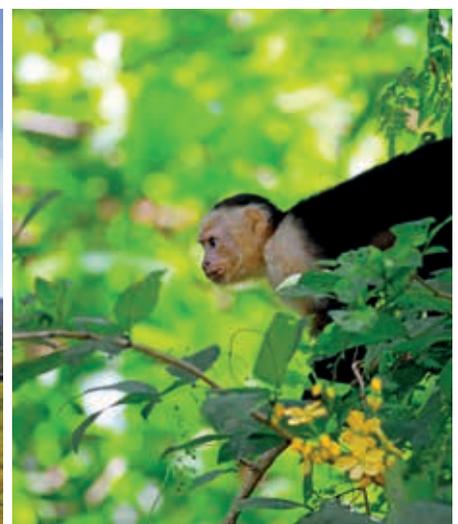
## Monteverde

To the south of Arenal, the Monteverde Cloud Forest is a true trip highlight. This mountainous reserve's constant soft mist cloaks everything from waterfalls to stalking cats, including puma, jaguar and ocelot. On guided treks and strolls along canopy-level walkways, you can also expect to spot the weird and wonderful bare-necked umbrella bird, along with quetzals whose bright-green tail feathers can grow up to a metre in length.

## Manuel Antonio National Park

Be sure to end your adventure with the sun and sand of Costa Rica's idyllic west coast. But, it's not all beach relaxation, with the dense forests of the Manuel Antonio National Park host to scarlet macaws, clambering monkeys and twittering hummingbirds.

**A 14-DAY TAILOR-MADE JOURNEY TO COSTA RICA IS AVAILABLE FROM £2,930 PP** incl. flights, private transfers, 10 nights B&B accommodation, 2 nights full board & a mix of shared and private sightseeing. For a full itinerary visit [wexas.com/103885](http://wexas.com/103885) or call **0207 838 5894**.





# Indian Ocean finds new depth

Beginning March 24 2018, British Airways will fly a new route between its London Heathrow home and the Seychelles, making it the only airline to offer a non-stop service from the UK. Flights are set to take off twice weekly from March to October – ideal for a summer escape or a dose of spring and autumn sun. What’s more, departing Wednesdays and Saturdays, the timetable is set up perfectly for an immersive 10-day trip. Joining routes to Mauritius and the Maldives, it’s the last piece in the jigsaw of British Airways’ Indian Ocean coverage. To help guide you, we’ve picked out our favourite getaways across the region.

## THE SEYCHELLES



SAVE UP TO  
**£1,465 PP**  
Book by 31 January 18

### Four Seasons Resort, Malé

This all-villa gem comprises 67 luxury treehouses, each complete with private plunge pool and perched either on a jungled hillside or by the resort’s white-sand beach. Then, if you tire of the spa pavilions, infinity pool and sumptuous Creole dining, get active with complimentary yoga and a full range of watersports, including snorkelling and surfing. It’s all perfectly accessible, with no need to connect on from your inbound flight.

**PRICES START FROM £3,880 PP** incl. flights, private transfers & 7 nights B&B accommodation in a Garden View Villa. For more information, visit [wexas.com/102216](http://wexas.com/102216) or call **020 7838 5894**.

### Constance Lemuria Resort, Praslin

Offering something a touch more secluded, the Constance Lemuria is positioned right on the pristine beaches of Praslin Island. The spa is superb, the all-suite accommodation is delightfully elegant and the show kitchens are sommelier paired. And, when you’ve returned from mornings spent diving with turtles and whale sharks, you can play a round at the Seychelles’ only 18-hole golf course.

**PRICES START FROM £2,420 PP** incl. flights, private transfers & 7 nights B&B accommodation in a Junior Suite. For more information, visit [wexas.com/102172](http://wexas.com/102172) or call **020 7838 5894**.

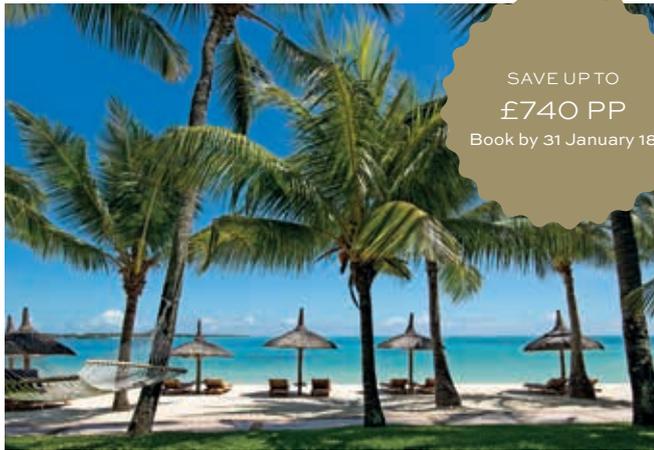


SAVE UP TO  
**£1,060 PP**  
Book by 31 January 18

**RECOMMENDED COMBO** The Seychelles stalwart is a twin-centre escape. Flying into Mahé, flop right onto the Four Seasons before heading out to explore the pristine beaches of Praslin with the Constance Lemuria. Otherwise, look out for the new Four Seasons Desroches – see page 39 – to get away to a secluded coral island. Call **020 7838 5894** for more details.



## MAURITIUS



SAVE UP TO  
£740 PP  
Book by 31 January 18

### One&Only Le St Géran

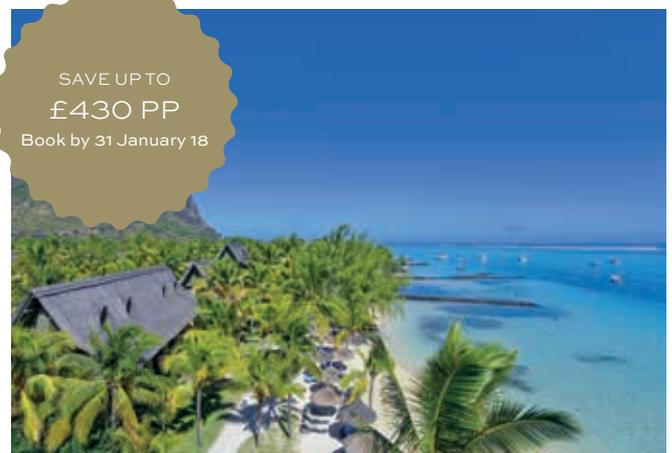
This long-standing icon of Mauritian luxury is brand new for December 2017. However, while its multi-million-dollar refurbishment has brought new glitz to its contemporary-colonial rooms, they still enjoy the same views of its private peninsula's sandy beaches and glittering seas. Gourmet dining experiences are also matched with a surfeit of excellent facilities, from the spa and yoga classes to tennis courts and watersports.

**PRICES START FROM £2,035 PP** incl. flights, private transfers & 7 nights B&B accommodation in a Lagoon Room. For more information, visit [wexas.com/101537](http://wexas.com/101537) or call **020 7838 5894**.

### Paradis Beachcomber

A true Wexas favourite, the Paradis Beachcomber offers luxury at superb value. Set between the craggy peaks of the Le Morne Mountains and a gorgeous palm-fringed beachfront, it offers everything from watersports to bike rides and nature walks. Then, return to spa treatments, indulgent French dining and lagoon views from your wood-accented room. Its golf course is also one of Mauritius's finest.

**PRICES START FROM £1,775 PP** incl. flights, private transfers & 7 nights B&B accommodation in a Deluxe Room. For more information, visit [wexas.com/103602](http://wexas.com/103602) or call **020 7838 5894**.



SAVE UP TO  
£430 PP  
Book by 31 January 18

**RECOMMENDED COMBO** The Mauritian beaches offer the ideal relaxing end to a road trip among South Africa's vineyards, city icons and wildlife-filled national parks. Call **020 7838 5894** for more details.

## THE MALDIVES



SAVE UP TO  
£845 PP  
Book by 31 January 18

### Baros Maldives

Stepping off your plane and onto a speedboat set for your private island is perhaps the most romantic way to arrive in the Maldives. Then, at Baros, you'll settle into your teak villa, positioned by the beach or on stilts over the water. There are also all the usual trappings, from spa indulgences and fine-dining extravagance to watersports and world-class diving. The champagne-and-canapés dolphin cruise is a special highlight.

**PRICES START FROM £1,975 PP** incl. flights, speedboat transfers & 7 nights B&B accommodation in a Deluxe Villa. For more information, visit [wexas.com/101634](http://wexas.com/101634) or call **020 7838 5894**.

**RECOMMENDED COMBO** The Maldives perfectly lines up with Sri Lanka, pairing white-sands relaxation with jungle-clad temples, colonial fortresses and elephant-animated rainforests. Call **020 7838 5894** for more details.



## A Skytrax 4-Star Airline

Since its foundation in 1993, Oman Air has built a reputation as one of the world's leading airlines. Connecting the world to its Muscat hub, its growing fleet flies to 50 destinations across 27 countries, including twice-daily flights out of London Heathrow and daily flights from Manchester.

## On the ground in Muscat

From hot showers to visa services, Muscat International Airport offers a full range of facilities. Passengers flying in First or Business Class will also enjoy access to exclusive lounges, with complimentary food, massages and beverages available – including a fine selection of wines.

## In the sky

For the past three years, Oman Air's Economy Class has been recognised in the World Travel Awards as the industry's finest. Expect a generous 34" seat pitch, curated dining predicated on seasonal ingredients and a full range of connectivity options, from Wi-Fi and mobile services to USB points and 10.6" entertainment screens. Then, in Business Class, champagne-accompanied fine dining is served right to your 6.5-foot lie-flat bed, while the six passengers in First are treated to a luxurious onboard lounge, an award-winning wine cellar and the industry's longest lie-flat bed, complete with inbuilt massage system.





## DESTINATION: Oman

Often unfairly compared to its big-boy neighbours, Oman is repeatedly placed in the shadow of the Burj Khalifa or outshone by the glitz of Abu Dhabi. But instead, this intriguing sultanate offers the near-unique opportunity to experience Arabian culture without the grandstanding. Yes, Muscat has its sprawl, but when you've left the capital, you'll discover mudbrick towns etched into cliffs, date plantations hidden in remote valleys and souk market towns watched over by crumbling forts. It's all backdropped by a spectacular natural world of craggy mountains that spill down into ochre deserts and pristine coastlines.

That's not to say, however, that you'll be without your comforts. In fact, Oman is one of the best-value winter sun destinations, combining luxury experiences and near-guaranteed good weather with seasonal flight and hotel deals. The Wexas pick is Shangri-La's Barr Al Jissah Resort & Spa, chosen for its private beach

and an excellent spread of dining options and facilities. Return from mountain treks and snorkelling trips to relaxing spa treatments, poolside bars and palatial rooms, housed in either the adults-focused or family-friendly wing.

It's perfectly combined with a trip into the Al Hajar Mountains, where steep gorges are dotted with damask roses, hidden caves and ancient villages. An eight-day, twin-centre trip between the Shangri-La and Al Hajar starts from £2,375 pp, including flights, luxury accommodation, private transfers throughout and exclusive tours of Muscat and Nizwa. Here, vibrant souks, tribal mud houses and 17th-century forts compete for your attention. For more information, visit [wexas.com/138958](http://wexas.com/138958).

Alternatively, go for shorter stays in the resorts and opt for a comprehensive private tour of the country. An eight-day itinerary will see you between turtle-nesting beaches, historic port towns and Portuguese forts that date to the 1500s. And, that's just the first day outside of Muscat. Then, there's everything from mountain walks and dinners in Bedouin desert camps to visits to hidden stone villages and some time, of course, to relax at the Shangri-La. Prices for this itinerary start at £2,940 pp and include return flights, luxury accommodation, selected meals and private touring throughout. For a full breakdown, visit [wexas.com/102489](http://wexas.com/102489).

Alternatively, call our Middle East specialists on **020 7838 5894**.





# East meets Middle East



Following its new, four-times-weekly flight to Chiang Mai in northern Thailand, the multi-award-winning Qatar Airways is bringing its industry-leading customer experience to even more Southeast Asian destinations with the introduction of a new Penang service, taking off in February 2018. Wexas Asia Specialist, **Daniel Wright**, gets the lowdown.

## The onboard experience

As one of the only airlines to achieve the much-coveted five-star Skytrax rating, it's clear that Qatar Airways is doing something right. Indeed, with flights from London Heathrow to its Doha hub on either the state-of-the-art 787 Dreamliner or the celebrated Airbus A380, customers can expect the latest technologies and the highest levels of comfort. And, for those travelling on the recently launched Adelaide route, the all-new A350 promises a redesigned interior and 25% less fuel burn, great for those all-important green credentials. No matter which you choose, you

can expect everything from fresh pillows, blankets and hot towels to the latest in onboard entertainment with an eye-watering 4,000 options available, including all the latest blockbusters, of course.

In Business Class, the new Q Suite – currently available on one of their Boeing 777s from Heathrow – sets the standard for premium travel, with sliding privacy doors, ambient lighting, fully lie-flat beds and a private seating experience for you and your travel companions. Best of all, the area can convert back to private rooms for an unrivalled Business Class experience.

Indeed, for overnight flights, plush duvets and quilted mattresses are complemented by sleepwear from The White Company, and amenities from the luxury Italian brands Bric's and Castello Monte Vibiano. Meanwhile, in First, customers can take advantage of celebrity-chef signature dishes, designer amenity kits and sleeper suits.

## In transit

With short transfer times on many flights, and a brand new airport to explore for those longer connections, transiting through Doha couldn't be easier, or more enjoyable. Home to one of the world's largest shopping areas, the new Hamad International Airport also comes fully kitted out with entertainment nodes, quiet rooms, workstations and art installations. It really is one of the best transfer points for long-haul holidays from the UK.

## Destinations

With a network of over 150 destinations, including routes to New Zealand and Australia, Qatar Airways is already one of the world's largest airlines, and it's growing fast. UK customers can choose from over 70 flights a week, including six daily departures from London Heathrow, 16 weekly flights from Manchester, and daily departures from both Birmingham and Edinburgh. And, they're set to be joined in May





## PENANG & THE MALAYSIAN PENINSULA

Take in the diverse highlights of the Malaysian Peninsula with boutique stays and exclusive touring included throughout, whether it's tea tastings and Land Rover tours in the Cameron Highlands or a night safari and canopy walk in Taman Negara. You'll also be treated to Kuala Lumpur's iconic skyline along with the colonial charm of beach-fringed Penang and Malacca, where you'll enjoy a river cruise between Chinese temples and European forts.

**PRICES FROM £1,835 PP** incl. UK airport lounge access, flights with Qatar Airways, private transfers & 8 nights accommodation, selected meals & private touring. For more information, visit [wexas.com/102424](http://wexas.com/102424) or call **020 7838 5894**.



SAVE UP TO  
**£230 PP**  
Book by 31 January 18



2018 by daily services from Cardiff, making Qatar Airways the first Gulf airline to fly from Wales.

But, it's the new routes to the Far East that have really got us excited, with a four-times-weekly flight to Chiang Mai opening up northern Thailand's jungles and hill tribes, and a soon-to-be-launched service to Penang offering easier access to Malaysia's tropical west coast. I've picked out two of my favourite itineraries to inspire you, featured above and below.

## THAILAND DISCOVERY

Making the most of Qatar Airways' new route, this tailor-made trip takes in Thailand's highlights on a budget. It all starts with Chiang Mai, where you'll encounter elephants, hill tribes and temples in a spectacular jungle setting. From there, you'll jet south to buzzing Bangkok, Thailand's vibrant 24-hour capital, before the tropical beaches of Krabi on the beautiful Andaman Coast bring your holiday to a wonderfully laid-back conclusion.

**PRICES FROM £1,790 PP** incl. UK airport lounge access, flights with Qatar Airways, domestic flights, private transfers & 14 nights B&B accommodation. For more information, visit [wexas.com/103670](http://wexas.com/103670) or call **020 7838 5894**.



SAVE UP TO  
**£220 PP**  
Book by 31 January 18



# The world's first non-stop service between the UK and Australia

From March 2018, passengers will – for the first time – be able to fly non-stop between London Heathrow and Perth. Qantas's new route is set to slash journey times to the Western Australia capital by almost three hours, making the 9,000-mile flight in just 17 hours. Australia has never been so close.

Then, once arrived, Perth's brand-new transit lounge promises to cut journey times to destinations across Australia by up to an hour, complemented by excellent savings on connecting flights.

It's all down to the new Dreamliner 787-9. A host of energy-efficient

measures means that it burns nearly 20% less fuel per seat than comparative aircraft. And, nerdiness aside, initial reports are glowing, with passengers lauding its noise reduction and futuristic dimming windows. To be among the first on the new route, take a look at our curated itinerary below.

## PERTH, MARGARET RIVER & THE WEST COAST

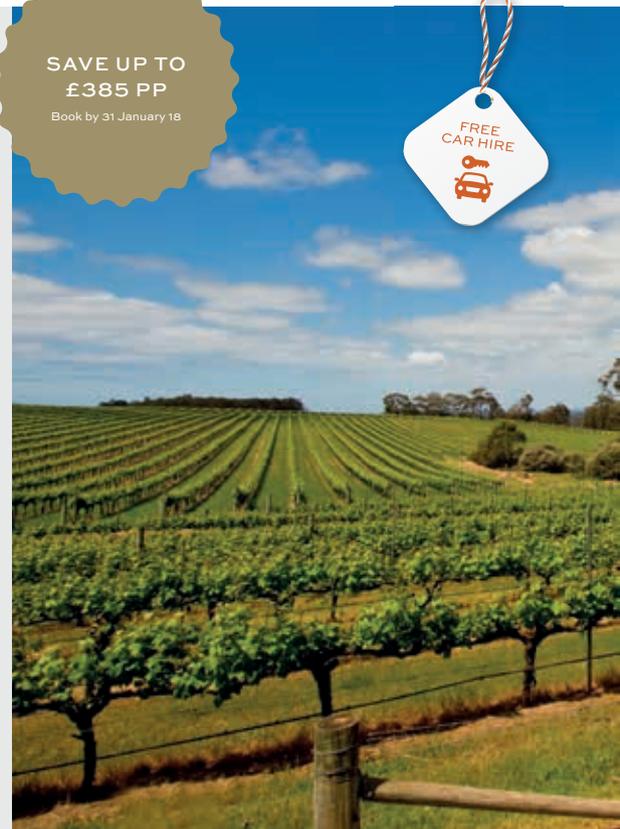
14-DAY TAILOR-MADE JOURNEY

This fortnight-long road trip starts, of course, in Perth. Although its beaches are as pretty as ever, its boomtown waterfront glitz is as brand new as the Qantas route. Coincidence? Then, it's into the rural idyll of Western Australia. After pausing to take in Rockingham's dolphins and artsy Dunsborough, you'll have three days to taste your way through the world-class vineyards of Margaret River, breaking up your indulgence with bush hikes, surf trips and farmers' markets. Then, after a night spent at Pemberton – a charming country town where walking trails lead out into karri forests – you'll arrive in William Bay. It's a postcard of aquamarine waters and pristine beaches, while snorkelling, canopy-level walks and cycling routes offer something more active. Finally, before ending with a night back in Perth, you'll enjoy two nights in colonial Albany for some seasonal whale watching and fresher-than-fresh seafood, perhaps caught on your very own fishing trip.

**PRICES START FROM £1,645 PP** incl. flights, private transfers, 11 nights accommodation & 10 days car hire. For a full itinerary, visit [wexas.com/102561](http://wexas.com/102561) or call **020 7838 5894**.

SAVE UP TO  
£385 PP

Book by 31 January 18





# New Singapore routing to Sydney for 2018

From March 25 2018, Qantas's daily London–Sydney service will stop routing via Dubai and will instead pause at Singapore. It offers travellers the chance to experience one of Asia's most dynamic cities where an intriguing history plays out to a skyscraping backdrop. While glass-and-steel wonders abound, basement markets still hawk up freshly steamed dumplings and colonial vestiges punctuate riversides. Not to be

outdone, Singapore Airlines – a Wexas-client favourite – offers the same route, set to be served by its brand-new “hotel rooms in the sky”. Last month, the airline unveiled its new first-class suites, offering lie-flat double beds, wardrobes and leather armchairs in what is essentially a private room. To take advantage, consider upgrading the itinerary below, either with the luxury of first class or a simple stopover in Singapore.

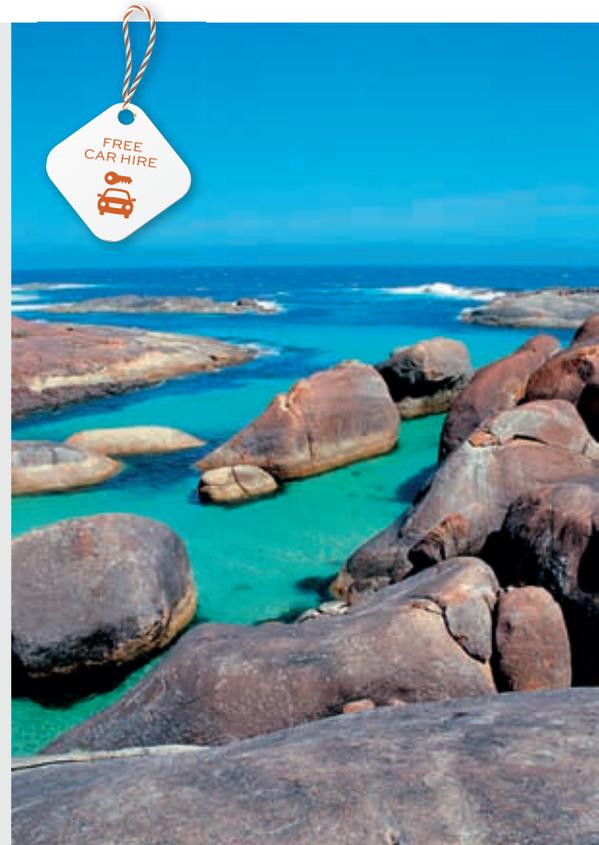


## SYDNEY TO BRISBANE BOUTIQUE SELF-DRIVE

14-DAY TAILOR-MADE SELF-DRIVE

Take two weeks to get away to Australia's east coast, showcasing its sunny good looks with an ultra-scenic road trip and stays in a hand-picked selection of bijou properties. You'll start with Sydney's harbour icons and famous beaches before picking up your hire car to wind up into the Blue Mountains. Their forest-carpeted gorges make for spectacular drives and scenic bush walks before they roll out into the Hunter Valley – one of Australia's premier wine-growing regions. After sampling the local produce – there are some 150 wineries to choose from – you'll then head back to the coast with a stay in Port Stephens, whose resident dolphins are joined between May and November by migratory whales. Then, as you continue north up the coast, you'll pause at pretty seaside towns and secluded beaches before arriving in Byron Bay for two nights of surf, sand and relaxation. Finally, end with buzzy Brisbane's rooftop bars and riverside restaurants before your overnight flight home.

**PRICES START FROM £1,490 PP** incl. flights, 10 nights accommodation & 8 days car hire. For a full itinerary, visit [wexas.com/103059](http://wexas.com/103059) or call **020 7838 5894**.





SAVE UP TO  
£465 PP  
Book by 31 January 18

# THE RHYTHMS OF THE DEEP SOUTH



Wexas USA specialist *Heather Harris* dances to a slide-guitar rhythm in America's southern states.

British Airways has announced that, starting May 2018, it will operate the first-ever direct flights between London and one of my favourite cities – Nashville. In a nod to the city's musical heritage, the move was announced by chart-topping favourites Kings of Leon. But, it's not just rock that gave 'Music City' its name. In fact, with a wealth of live music venues, I've found myself swaying to soulful blues one moment and the next tapping my feet to country twangs. It's all fed in from the surrounding region. So, to help guide you, I've picked out my favourite stops on a musical pilgrimage to the Deep South. Together, they form an ideal road trip that ends in New Orleans, handily with a non-stop flight home.

## Memphis, Tennessee

After Nashville, make Memphis your first stop. The "Birthplace of Rock 'n' Roll" wears its moniker with pride

in such cultural heavyweights as Elvis's Graceland, the Gibson guitar factory and the Smithsonian Rock 'n' Soul Museum. I can also highly recommend a visit to the Sun and Stax studios, where everyone from Johnny Cash to Booker T made their names.

## Greenwood, Mississippi

Greenwood was once one of the world's most important cotton-producing centres, something remembered by its spread of delightfully restored buildings. It's also something of a mecca for blues fans, with the life and career of B.B. King brought to life in a dedicated museum, found in next-door Indianola.

## Lafayette, Louisiana

After taking in the charming antebellum mansions of Natchez, you'll arrive in Lafayette – a city alive with Cajun and Creole tradition. Think mouthwatering cuisine and lively dance halls.

## New Orleans, Louisiana

If Memphis has rock 'n' roll, then New Orleans is the birthplace of jazz. But, the Big Easy is no museum. Wander around the historic French Quarter and you'll soon catch mellifluous guitar strains billowing out of wrought-iron balconies and fragrant whiffs of indulgent Creole cuisine. That's without even mentioning the festivals, steamboat cruises and buzzing bars.

## A 13-DAY ROAD TRIP STARTS FROM £1,360 PP

Incl. flights, 11 nights accommodation & 7 days car hire. For a full itinerary, visit [wexas.com/101289](http://wexas.com/101289) or call 020 7838 5894.



virgin atlantic



DELTA



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With 40 flights a day between North America and the UK and a choice of over 200 onward connections, **Virgin Atlantic** and **Delta Air Lines**® are an ideal choice for travel to the USA. But, this unique partnership offers much more than a large network, convenient flight schedules and competitive fares.

- **Industry-leading onboard experience:** Expect amenity kits, movie snacks and complimentary drinks in economy cabins and fully flat beds with direct aisle access in Virgin Atlantic Upper Class and Delta One™
- **Rewarding mutual loyalty programmes:** Earn and spend frequent flyer miles on any Virgin Atlantic or Delta flight worldwide

- **The latest and greatest entertainment:** From blockbuster movies and the hottest TV shows to TED talks and a huge library of music
- **Intuitive, personal service:** Enjoy the airlines' signature hospitality
- **A shared home at London Heathrow's Terminal 3 and JFK Terminal 4:** Make the most of simpler departures, transfers and arrivals
- **Innovative ways to begin and end your journey:** Relax with luxurious pre- and post-flight lounges

For the latest fares and special offers, call a Wexas USA specialist on **020 7838 5894**.

virgin atlantic



DELTA





# SAIL AWAY IN STYLE

It's an exciting time in the cruise industry. New standards in ships are being set, routes are opening up and more and more of us are coming round to the unique combination of dynamic destinations and onboard indulgence that a luxury cruise affords. Indeed, over the past year, we've seen a dramatic rise in bookings. To celebrate, we've put together some of our finest offers, many of which are exclusive to Wexas. Think complimentary spending money on some of *the* most luxurious cruise lines and even the chance to sail again for free if you don't spot the Northern Lights on your Hurtigruten sailing.

We've also got plenty of expert insight. Emma Sanger-Horwell reports back from the Mekong, we've put together a list of the world's best river cruises and Maddalena Cardone offers her advice on choosing between a winter or summer departure for a Norwegian-fjord cruise. There's even an in-depth review of what promises to be the world's most luxurious expedition yacht – the new-for-2018 *Scenic Eclipse*.



# SILVERSEA 7 CONTINENTS



## Galápagos Voyage

16-DAY RAIL & CRUISE

FROM £9,470 PP incl. flights & rail journey

Following a four-day steam train journey between Ecuador's cloud forests and Andean peaks, an island-hopping cruise will bring you among the giant tortoises and lava lizards of the Galápagos, with expeditions led by expert biologists.

Departs UK 10 Aug 18. For full itinerary & inclusions, visit [wexas.com/147299](http://wexas.com/147299).

EXCLUSIVE  
\$250

ONBOARD  
SPENDING MONEY  
Book by 31 January 18



## New England Explorer

17-DAY STAY & CRUISE

FROM £5,815 PP incl. flights

Take in one of the darlings of world travel – New England in autumn. It all begins with the city greats and whale wildlife of French Canada before Maine lobsters, Boston's heritage and Victorian Rhode Island see you to New York.

Departs UK 4 Oct 18. For full itinerary & inclusions, visit [wexas.com/149545](http://wexas.com/149545).



## Antarctica Adventure

14-DAY STAY & CRUISE

FROM £10,400 PP incl. flights

While you'll enjoy Silversea's signature brand of ultra-luxury, this exploratory cruise will see you join dramatic ice floes, stop at continent-dwarfing glaciers and spot everything from whales to penguins, with expert-led landings throughout.

Departs UK 10 Dec 18. For full itinerary & inclusions, visit [wexas.com/147312](http://wexas.com/147312).



Silversea are a true Wexas client favourite, their luxury ships offering only the highest standards of all-inclusive service, extending from fine-dining French restaurants to open champagne bars and your butler-served suite. Think marble accents, a complimentary minibar and private verandahs. Then, along with a suite of luxury facilities, guests on expedition cruises are treated to a full spread of included excursions, with Zodiac trips and snorkel dives led by historians and marine biologists alike. What's more, sailing to all seven continents, Silversea serves more destinations than any other cruise line – 900 to be precise. With so much on offer, Wexas's very own Silversea expert, **Tim Tan**, has picked out his seven favourite routes, one for each continent. For more information on our featured Silversea cruises, call **020 7838 5894**.



**EXCLUSIVE**  
**\$250**

ONBOARD  
SPENDING MONEY  
Book by 31 January 18



### Adriatic Romance

12-DAY STAY & CRUISE

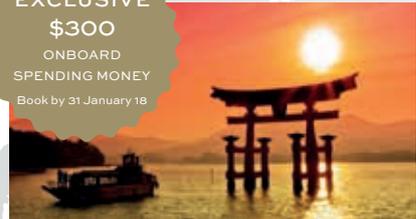
FROM £5,300 PP incl. flights

Between palatial stays in Rome and Venice, a Greek pause on the paradise island of Corfu will bring you among the medieval grandeur of Montenegro's Kotor and the terracotta-capped charm of Croatia's Split and Rovinj.

Departs UK 10 Aug 18. For full itinerary & inclusions, visit [wexas.com/149344](http://wexas.com/149344).

**EXCLUSIVE**  
**\$300**

ONBOARD  
SPENDING MONEY  
Book by 31 January 18



### Japan to the Philippines

21-DAY STAY & CRUISE

FROM £11,210 PP incl. flights

With some of the world's most scenic island hops, you'll contrast the rural idyll and cherry-blossom castle towns of Japan with the colonial charm and rich exoticism of the Philippines. Expect snorkel trips and Japanese cooking lessons.

Departs UK 13 Apr 18. For full itinerary & inclusions, visit [wexas.com/149370](http://wexas.com/149370).



### African Adventure

23-DAY STAY & CRUISE

FROM £9,395 PP incl. flights

This is the ultimate African cruise. Starting from Cape Town, you'll take in Namibia's deserts and wildlife before Angola's colonial charm and São Tomé's island idyll see you on to Togolese plantations, Cameroonian jungles and Ghanaian beaches.

Departs UK 25 Mar 19. For full itinerary & inclusions, visit [wexas.com/147311](http://wexas.com/147311).



### Sydney to Auckland

18-DAY STAY & CRUISE

FROM £8,570 PP incl. flights

While you'll take in the city icons of Sydney, Melbourne and Auckland, this curated route also showcases its countries' natural splendour. There's everything from Tasmania's rugged good looks to Napier's vineyards and Akaroa's volcanic might.

Departs UK 3 Jan 19. For full itinerary & inclusions visit [wexas.com/149939](http://wexas.com/149939).



# INTRODUCING the world's most luxurious expedition yacht

It hasn't even hit the waters yet and many of the *Scenic Eclipse's* voyages for 2018 – and even 2019 – are already sold out. Few launches in recent history have been so hotly anticipated, something partly down to Scenic's fierce brand loyalty and wholly thanks to the ship itself. And, the media hype is fully deserved.

Launching 31 August 2018, *Scenic Eclipse* is set to become the world's first discovery yacht, combining the highest possible ice class with a flawlessly sleek design. As such, whether it's Antarctic passages or remote Chilean fjords, it's able to go where larger ships simply can't. Indeed, the lucky few aboard – just 228 passengers





or 200 in polar regions – will be hosted by a near one-to-one staff-to-guest ratio, promising an intimate, private-yacht atmosphere. We can, therefore, expect butler service and private verandahs across the all-suite accommodation, where artists' impressions hint at rich woods and textured fabrics. In terms of upgrades, think Jacuzzis, private dining areas and commanding overlooks of the ship's bow.

This being Scenic, it's all wrapped up in a fully inclusive experience, showcased best with the indulgent dining options. There will be 10 experiences to choose between, spanning from casual cafés and poolside grills to Italian classics and French fine-dining extravaganzas. In between, you'll find pan-Asian delicacies, a 24-hour in-suite service and a chefs' emporium dedicated to culinary demonstrations. For something more intimate, head to the sushi counter or book onto a private degustation experience at the Chef's Table. It's all washed down with a full complement of open bars, serving everything from carefully crafted cocktails to premium champagne.

Of course, there's also an excellent spread of 6-star facilities. Alongside the usual hot tubs, pools, spa treatments and fitness-centre classes, *Scenic Eclipse* even features its very own helicopter and submarine. For something more active, the all-inclusive collection of shore excursions will see you head out on Zodiac cruises, snorkel trips, kayak paddles and scuba dives. And, with itineraries ranging from the Arctic and Antarctic to Cuba and the Caribbean, you really will want to get out and explore.



## THE ULTIMATE ARCTIC

12-DAY LUXURY CRUISE

Be among the first to sail on the ultra-luxurious *Scenic Eclipse* with this June 2019 departure. After a luxury stay among Oslo's heritage and cutting-edge design scene, you'll fly up to meet the *Scenic Eclipse* in Svalbard – a wilderness archipelago in the Arctic Ocean that's flung nearly 2,000 kilometres north of Norway.

As with cruises to Antarctica, your captain and expedition leaders will tailor your itinerary to the weather and ice floes – a flexible approach that makes the most of the local wildlife activity. And, due to her smaller size and technological capabilities, the *Scenic Eclipse* is able to bring you to otherwise-unreachable harbours with a minimum of environmental impact. At each stop, you'll be treated to a full range of included shore excursions, from snowshoe hikes to kayak trips and Zodiac cruises. Expect to spot polar bears, Arctic fox, walrus and several species of whales as you weave between secluded bays and stunning fjords, pausing to watch icebergs calve off colossal glaciers. When not out exploring, you'll have plenty of time to make use of the ship's industry-leading facilities. Aside from the gourmet drinks and dining, you can soothe any sightseeing aches with the spa, or enjoy some exercise for both body and mind with the lecture programme and fitness facilities.

**PRICES FROM £8,295 PP** incl. flights, transfers, 1 night hotel accommodation & 10 nights aboard *Scenic Eclipse* with all drinks, dining & shore excursions. For a full, day-by-day itinerary, visit [wexas.com/149740](http://wexas.com/149740) or call **020 7838 5894**.



# Greek Island hopping with Regent Seven Seas Cruises

There's something undeniably romantic about hopping between the Greek islands. Marvelling at brilliant blue waters, relaxing on white-sand beaches and basking in the Mediterranean sun. But, this is also the land of the Greek gods. From the Olympic Stadium to Rhodes' acropolis and the Minoan palace of Knossos, this is your chance to walk among the ancients.

There's also a lot to say for simply succumbing to island life. Kayak with dolphins, wander through quiet, fishermen's villages and indulge with some of the finest Greek cuisine; just-caught seafood and *souvlaki* skewers are among the highlights.

The only problem? There are some 6,000 islands and islets to choose from. That's why we recommend Regent Seven Seas Cruises® for the most inclusive, ultra-luxury cruise experience at sea. Their itineraries – including the one featured opposite – not only showcase a curated selection of the region's finest destinations, but they also feature a fantastic spread of expert-led shore excursions along with fine dining and premium wines and spirits, all included as standard. Here's what you can expect with Regent Seven Seas® in each port:

## SANTORINI

This is the Greece of glossy travel magazines. Whitewash glitters in the Mediterranean sun, thatched windmills laze slowly in the sea breeze and cobbled alleyways lead between inviting tavernas. You'll arrive by



tender boat for a spectacular view of it all before taking in the grand Venetian castle – the island’s crown – with a donkey or cable-car ride. What’s more, given the region’s volcanicity, much of the surrounding prehistory has been wonderfully preserved, showcased in fascinating museums and Akrotiri – an excavated Bronze-Age settlement. Alternatively, if it’s the natural world you’re interested in, swim in thermal springs and walk alongside dramatic lava formations before retiring with a Greek wine.

### CORFU

Having first harboured the likes of the Argonauts, Hercules and Homer’s Odysseus, the flower-strewn island of Corfu has a certain gravitas when it comes to hospitality. And, you’ll be equally well accommodated, your complimentary shore excursions bringing you among garden-ringed palaces, the 14th-century Venetian fortress, Byzantine monasteries and vineyards fragrant by citrus trees. As always, you’ll explore at a pace that suits you, with walks, coach trips and 4WD expeditions to choose from.

### KATAKOLON (OLYMPIA)

Sleepy Katakolon is a tiny enclave, its colourful fishermen’s houses clinging to the Peloponnese coast. And, aside from its quieter charms, it’s an ideal gateway for tours to Olympia. Driving through rolling hills and olive groves, you’ll reach this once-great city’s excavated remains. From the Temple of Zeus to the iconic stadium itself, it’s packed full of ancient wonders. Bring it all to life with included visits to the archaeological museum and the chance to sample Greek wine and snacks while enjoying a folkloric performance.

### GYTHION

You’ll be welcomed to Gythion by a spectacular coastline and white-sand beaches. And, as the former seaport of Sparta, your expert guides will showcase everything from archaeological excavations to a statue of King Leonidas himself. Further touring will see you on to 19th-century country houses, Neolithic cave dwellings and Mystras – a medieval stronghold of churches and mansions. Here, you’ll take in fine frescoes, vaulted halls and historic fountains. There’s also the chance to indulge with the region’s rich gastronomy in winery tastings and tasting tours of historic olive plantations.

For a complete list of free shore excursions for these and other Regent Seven Seas Cruises® destinations, call a Wexas cruise specialist on **020 7838 5894**.



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## ORIENT EXPRESS & THE GREEK ISLANDS

15-DAY RAIL, STAY & CRUISE

We’ve picked out this June 2018 itinerary, not only because it features all of the destinations we’ve recommended, but because it lines up perfectly with a journey on the Orient Express. Fully detailed on pages 26–27, this is one of the world’s greatest rail journeys, sweeping between London and Venice in a whirl of Art-Deco opulence and gourmet dining. Then, after a luxury stay among the winding canals of Italy’s floating city, you’ll set sail on the Adriatic. Either side of your Greek island hopping, you’ll pause at the terracotta charm of Croatia’s Split, the medieval walled city of Kotor, Umbria – Tuscany’s quieter rival – and Slovenia’s Koper, where red-tiled roofs spill down to a glittering marina.

Your time on board *Seven Seas Voyager* is equally considered. Introductions are made in your suite with a bottle of champagne, a private balcony and even a marble bathroom. But, it’s not just your daily replenished minibar that’s complimentary, with fine wines served in open bars and all-inclusive gourmet dining spanning from poolside grills to fine French cuisine. You’ll also be treated to a well-stocked library, cocktail pool bar and a card room, while the casino, cigar lounge and superb theatre add extra entertainment. The spa is a special highlight, complemented by a superb fitness centre.

**PRICES FROM £8,560 PP** incl. flight, transfers, journey aboard British Pullman & Venice Simplon-Orient-Express, 3 nights accommodation & 10 nights aboard *Seven Seas Voyager* with all meals, drinks & shore excursions. For a full itinerary, visit [wexas.com/147287](http://wexas.com/147287) or call **020 7838 5894**.



CRUISING OFF THE BEATEN TRACK:

# Russia and the Baltics

By Wexas Scandinavia specialist,  
*Saija Kokkonen.*



Hailing from Finland, it's fair to say I might be a touch biased when it comes to northern Europe. But, for me, it's a perfect cruise destination. Not only can you knit together Scandinavia's iconic capitals, but you can take the hassle out of Russia with a visa-free visit. That's all while enjoying the best of the Baltic cities. Their medieval old towns are wonderfully evocative and delightfully compact, making them ideal for a short cruise stop. And, from Latvia's Riga to Estonia's Tallin, they don't get anywhere near the attention they deserve. You'll often have that fairytale basilica or thousand-year-old castle almost to yourself; this really is the time to go. To help give you some steer, I've picked out the itinerary opposite.



## SCANDINAVIAN TREASURES

11-DAY LUXURY CRUISE

DEPARTURE 22 June 2018 SHIP *MS Marina*

PORTS OF CALL Copenhagen, Berlin (Warnemünde), Klaipėda, Riga, Helsinki, St. Petersburg, Tallinn, Stockholm

PRICES FROM £2,375 PP incl. flights, 10 nights aboard *MS Marina*, full-board dining, free Wi-Fi & shuttle transfers in many ports. For a full itinerary and list of inclusions, visit [wexas.com/150030](http://wexas.com/150030) or call 020 7838 5894.

I've chosen this itinerary for two reasons – its curated route and Oceania's signature luxury service. Travelling aboard *MS Marina*, you'll be surrounded by designer accents, from the Lalique grand staircase to your marbled stateroom. However, it's the dining where the ship really stands out. Oceania spend more on ingredients per guest than any other cruise line, so expect USDA prime cuts in the poolside grill, quartet-accompanied afternoon teas and French-dining degustation. There's also a full complement of superb facilities, from a spa and pool to a theatre and artists' studio. What's more, if you book with Wexas, we have an exclusive offer of complimentary pre-paid gratuities, along with a choice of either six shore excursions, a house beverage package or \$600 shipboard credit.

And, following an included flight, you'll be welcomed aboard in Copenhagen. The Danish capital has long been a personal favourite of mine, with its effortless combination of Scandi cool and unique heritage. While the Rococo Royal Palace is an obvious highlight, there's everything from neoclassical mansions to Scandinavia's largest collection of Islamic Art.

Your first port of call is quaint Warnemünde. Sited on 12 miles of pristine sands, it's long been renowned as an idyllic summertime getaway, not least for its excellent restaurants housed in historic cottages. However, if you haven't visited already, I highly recommend the short journey on to Berlin, where the Reichstag's imperial might stands side by side with cutting-

edge contemporary art galleries. After a day at sea to make the most of the *Marina's* facilities, you'll next make land in Lithuania with Klaipėda. Concentrate your time here on its beautifully cobbled old town, where redbrick buildings line waterways and weathered statues stand guard over quiet squares. And, while just one tower of its castle remains, you'll be treated to the full grandeur of Riga Castle next; its great green spires enjoy a leafy, riverside setting. Then, heading into the city's colourful, Art-Nouveau centre you'll find the amber markets. I've particularly fond memories of buying my first piece of jewellery here as a 12-year-old girl.

However, having studied for three-and-a-half years in Helsinki, I've even fonder memories of your next stop. Although the city's daringly contemporary architecture and neo-Renaissance heritage grab the headlines, it would be remiss of me not to point you towards that most Finnish of traditions – the sauna. My pick is the Löyly for its cinnamon buns and seafront location.

It's then time for your cruise's centrepiece, St. Petersburg. I chose this itinerary because it features a longer stay here, affording you three full days to take in Russia's second-largest city. And, with so much on offer, you need it. It's best to think of St. Petersburg as an outdoor museum, so book onto a tour – not only because it circumnavigates the visa process, but because you'll miss so much otherwise.

Positioned just across the gulf, Estonia's Tallinn is another Finnish favourite. It's a delightful blend of glass-and-steel modernity and what is one of Europe's best-preserved walled cities, replete with centuries-old stone towers and terracotta-capped houses. My recommendation? Take a rest from sightseeing at one of its 1920s-inspired speakeasy bars. Then, end in Stockholm to take in its island-bound charm, where intriguing design studios sit side by side with historic palaces.



## ROMANCE OF THE RIVIERAS WITH SEABOURN

12-DAY LUXURY CRUISE

From open bars and all-inclusive, Michelin-standard dining to complimentary room service and performances where the drinks service continues through the show, this is a cruise that lives up to the glamour of its destination. It all begins in August 2018, with two nights in the Catalan capital, Barcelona. As well as featuring skyline views from its rooftop pool and bar, your luxury hotel is set right among the Gothic Quarter's famous churches and plaza-side tapas bars.

It's then time to board the *Seabourn Encore*, where you'll be welcomed to your suite's private balcony, marble bathroom and walk-in closet by a glass of champagne, served by your personal stewardess. The indulgences continue throughout the ship, with luxurious facilities ranging from teakwood-framed swimming pools, a superb spa and private cabanas to a casino, theatre and fully equipped gym. Your first port of call is Mahon – Menorca's charming capital. Quieter than its Balearic cousins, its laid-back beaches and gorgeous coastlines hide remnants of Bronze Age settlements and a Spanish fortress that dates to the 1700s.

You'll then begin your riviera cruise in Marseille, where you'll be met by its impressively Romanesque cathedral and the Haussmannian architecture of the République quarter. If you don't want to head out into the surrounding Provençal countryside, get a taste for it with one of the city's lauded restaurants or wine bars. Your next stop, St. Tropez, is set on one of the prettiest sections of the French Riviera, all glittering blue and golden beach curves. Unsurprisingly, St. Tropez owes much of its fame to painters with names like Matisse and Marquet, who fell for the town's jewellery-box collection of fishing boats, colourful houses and terracotta-capped

buildings. It all makes for evocative strolls and long afternoons spent exploring galleries and browsing antiques shops.

Hopping over to Corsica, you'll then drop anchor at Ajaccio's idyllic beaches. But, if you move inland, the landscape breaks up into snaggletooth peaks, plunging gorges and great forested swathes dotted with hilltop villages. It's the chance to get active with hiking and kayaking trips before you indulge with the island's unique gastronomy and wine. Then, calling into Monaco, your next stop is Monte Carlo. The epitome of Riviera chic, this hedonists' playground is a homage to excess, summed up by the movie-star glitz of its iconic casino. There's also the beautiful Jardin Exotique, the spectacular Prince's Palace and a 9th-century Romanesque-Byzantine cathedral.

It's then on to Italy and Portovonere. While St. Tropez had its artists, this harbourfront village is the preserve of poets. Everyone from Dante and Petrarch to Byron and Shelley has been captured by its clifftop setting and 12th-century battlements, today still fronted by long, yellowing houses. Alternatively, you'll have the option of an excursion to Pisa to take in its leaning icon before ending your cruise in Rome. You'll have two nights in the Italian capital, staying in a hotel that's hosted one Pablo Picasso with its marbled mosaics and 3,000 square metres of gardens. There are also all of the city's star attractions to take in before you fly home, with the Vatican's splendour matched by that of the Roman Forum and Coliseum.

**FROM £4,160 PP** incl. flights, private transfers, 4 nights B&B accommodation & 7 nights aboard *Seabourn Encore* with all-inclusive drinks, dining & on-board entertainment. For a full itinerary and list of inclusions, visit [wexas.com/147349](http://wexas.com/147349).





# The French and Italian Rivas

From Pablo Picasso and Brigitte Bardot to Queen Victoria and the 18th-century British upper class, the French Riviera has long attracted Europe's rich and famous. Indeed, there's plenty of glitz and glamour between the world-class vineyards, Art-Deco architecture and white-sand beaches. Even the Romans were drawn here, something evidenced by a legacy of superbly preserved monuments tucked away among Provençal lavender fields and olive groves. Not to be outdone, its Italian counterpart links Tuscany with France's Côte d'Azur – a connection both geographic and cultural. It's here that rustic charm meets old-world extravagance, with a dramatic natural world of Alpine peaks and precipitous cliffs shared by lavish palazzi and tumbles of pastel-coloured villages. And, with the Mediterranean's endless shimmer knitting it all together, the best way to take it all in is with a luxury Seabourn cruise. We've picked out our favourite opposite.





# The World's Best River Cruises

There's perhaps nothing more romantic than a river cruise, watching the scenery slip by with a glass of something cool and stopping off at fresh destinations each day. And, for over 90 years, APT has offered some of the finest examples. Think boutique ships, full-board gourmet dining and a full spread of included excursions, tailored to each destination. Here, our river cruise specialists have picked out five of their favourites for 2018.

## 1 Magnificent Europe: the Rhine and Danube

15-DAY RIVER CRUISE FROM £2,795 PP incl. flights

Combining two of the Continent's most storied waterways – the Rhine and Danube – this is perhaps the ultimate European river cruise, taking a leisurely fortnight to link Holland and Hungary via Germany and Austria. It's fitting, therefore, that the included excursions are suitably grand. There's everything from vineyard tastings and a castle banquet to a world-class private concert in a historic palace and a luxury charter train journey through the Alpine countryside. In between, there's also plenty of time to take in some of Europe's city greats. There's Amsterdam's canalside charm, Cologne's cathedral spires, Vienna's imperial might and Budapest's medieval severity among the highlights.

Incl. flights, transfers & 14 nights all-inclusive river cruise with Freedom of Choice sightseeing & select complimentary beverages at all times on board. For a full itinerary & inclusions visit [wexas.com/104214](http://wexas.com/104214) or call **020 7838 5894**.

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## 2 Vietnam and Cambodia Highlights

15-DAY RIVER CRUISE FROM £3,995 PP incl. flights

The Mekong River is the lifeblood of Southeast Asia, linking stilted villages with forgotten temple complexes. On this curated itinerary, you'll enjoy it all in utter luxury, pausing for colonial towns, potters' villages and the great golden palaces of Phnom Penh – the Cambodian capital. There's also a full range of excursions, from tuk tuk rides and dance performances to monastery visits, horse-and-cart rides and Khmer cooking classes. Either side, you'll also enjoy a pair of luxury stays, being treated to guerrilla tunnels and degustation dinners in Ho Chi Minh City before ending with the great Temples of Angkor. This thousand-year-old lost city is a true highlight of world travel. See overleaf for a full, experts' report on this itinerary.

Incl. flights, transfers, 5 nights accommodation, excursions & 7 nights all-inclusive river cruise with select complimentary beverages at all times on board. For a full itinerary & inclusions visit [wexas.com/150032](http://wexas.com/150032) or call **020 7838 5894**.



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£800 PER  
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## 3 Rhine Treasures

8-DAY RIVER CRUISE FROM £2,995 PP incl. flights

This weeklong itinerary showcases the best of the Rhine, slipping out of Amsterdam to wind through the Dutch countryside and into Germany. Here, you'll sail some of the river's most scenic sections, watching as vineyard-dappled slopes give way to near-ancient castles. Then, in among the rural idyll, further highlights include Gothic Cologne, Speyer's Romanesque cathedral and cobbled-street Breisach's pastel houses before you end in artsy Basel. Of course, there are plenty of unique excursions included, from wine tastings and a tour through the Black Forest to a cruise along Amsterdam's canals. You'll even have exclusive access to explore Narny Castle before a banquet dinner.

Incl. flights, transfers & 7 nights all-inclusive river cruise with Freedom of Choice sightseeing & select complimentary beverages at all times on board. For a full itinerary & inclusions, visit [wexas.com/150034](http://wexas.com/150034) or call **020 7838 5894**.

## 4 Highlights of the Danube

8-DAY RIVER CRUISE FROM £1,795 PP incl. flights

Put simply, the Danube is one of the world's iconic waterways and is host to some of Europe's greatest cities. But, there's plenty more than the cultural might of Vienna and Budapest's spa icons. On this seven-night sailing, you'll taste your way through Regensburg's Bavarian specialities, wander through Melk's iconic Benedictine monastery and take in the intriguing heritage of Nuremberg, both chequered and landmark medieval. It's all wrapped up in expert-led tours and scenic bike rides. You'll also have the option of using 2,000-year-old Linz as a gateway to Salzburg – a treasure trove of Baroque architecture and *Sound-of-Music* sights.

Incl. flights, transfers & 7 nights all-inclusive river cruise with Freedom of Choice sightseeing & select complimentary beverages at all times on board. For a full itinerary & inclusions visit [wexas.com/150033](http://wexas.com/150033) or call **020 7838 5894**.



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FREE  
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## 5 Majestic Myanmar

17-DAY RIVER CRUISE FROM £4,295 PP incl. flights

There's no more evocative – or stressless – way of knitting together Myanmar's endless charms than a cruise along the mighty Irrawaddy. You'll travel north from Yangon's golden pagodas and crumbling European architecture to head off the beaten track, pausing at traditional villages and colonial towns alike. Throughout, there's everything from gilded stupas and wooden monasteries to lacquered shrines and centuries-old forts. Then, before the pagoda-marked hills of Sagaing and the royal-capital heritage of Mandalay and Inwa, there's Bagan. A forgotten temple city, its thousand-strong collection of sandstone monoliths date back a millennium, dotting the verdant floodplains of the Irrawaddy.

Incl. flights, transfers & 14 nights full-board river cruise with excursions & drinks with meals. For a full itinerary & inclusions, visit [wexas.com/141333](http://wexas.com/141333) or call **020 7838 5894**.



# The mysteries of Cambodia and Vietnam



Having just returned from a river cruise between Cambodia and Vietnam, Wexas luxury cruise specialist **Emma Sanger-Horwell** finds out what makes the mighty Mekong so alluring.

The Edinburgh-Fringe-winning joke goes, “I’ve just been on a once-in-a-lifetime holiday. Never again”. But, I’d go back to Cambodia and Vietnam in a heartbeat. From world wonders and city greats to floating villages and truly heart-wrenching experiences, river-cruise specialists APT excelled. It was all showcased with well-thought-out tours, delightful accommodation and, of course, the small matter of a luxury river ship.

My trip began with a flight out to Siem Reap, the gateway to Angkor Wat. Over the next few days I’d find my feet with market visits, traditional dance performances, a welcome dinner and a stay in the colonial elegance of the Raffles Grand Hotel. The visit to Phare Circus was particularly evocative, portraying a girl’s struggles during the reign of the bloodthirsty Khmer Rouge through song and dance. However, it was those majestic temples that were the standout attraction. They’re a true highlight of world travel, remnants of a lost city where great stone



spires, smiling sculptures and ancient fortifications peak out from dense jungle. My recommendation? Beat the crowds with a sunrise visit to watch the intricate stonework come to life in the dawn glow. I, however, can’t be so effusive about the deep-fried tarantula served at a nearby village.

It was then time to board our river ship – the *RV La Marguerite*. Toeing the line between colonial-era charm and contemporary élan, it was resplendent in teakwood detailing and private balconies, while a spa, fitness centre with Travelmarvel and onboard Wi-Fi provide more modern comforts. I was particularly fond of the sun deck with its accompanying loungers and plunge pool. The dining was equally excellent, with plenty of options washed down with all-inclusive drinks. With local spirits and beers available free of charge throughout the day and complimentary wines served with meals, it was nice not to worry about a bar bill at the end.

Our first stop, weaving along the Tonlé Sap River, was a floating village. It was a truly privileged insight into a world so removed from our own as we mingled with boating traders and drifted past houses built entirely



on stilts. We then continued to Oudong, a town hidden among the foothills of Mt. Udong. Here, we jumped aboard an oxcart for a taste of rural Cambodia, winding down backcountry lanes to golden Buddhist temples as inquisitive children came out to meet us with broad smiles. In turn, Koh Chen showed us another side of village life with a visit to a local school. We dropped in on an English lesson to swap nursery rhymes with the pupils; their singing was better than ours! A good tip is to bring some pens and books to hand out. They're always well received.

We then arrived at the Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh, an energetic city unlike anything we had experienced so far. Wasting no time, we made the most of our evening at leisure with a visit to the night market. However, it was the next day that had the most effect on me. Learning about the all-too-recent atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge at the Killing Fields and Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum – a high school turned executioners' prison – brought me to tears on more than one occasion. It lent new weight to the keen optimism I'd been met with throughout my time in Cambodia. It's an enthusiasm that was particularly evident at our next stop – the Royal



Palace. Here, a proud guide brought us among its golden sweeping curves, illuminating each building's regal purpose.

After a busy schedule, it was then nice to have a day to take in the Mekong's scenery, with traditional river life playing out on its verdant banks. We didn't even have to leave the ship at the Vietnamese border before being welcomed to Tan Chau with a fun rickshaw ride, darting along palm-tree-fringed streets and touring the town's silk factory. We then arrived in Sa Dec to visit the French-Vietnamese house that once belonged to Huynh Thuy Le, the lover of our ship's namesake – Marguerite Duras. Then, it was on to Cai Be, a river town host to a floating market and a stunning Gothic cathedral. We also learnt about the local cottage industry with a visit to a rice paper manufacturer.

As in Cambodia, we were taken behind the scenes of the region's chequered past, this time with a visit to Cu Chi. This subterranean maze is a vast network of tunnels used by the resistance fighters during the Vietnam War. It was all brought to life with a tour of their traps and a crawl through their narrow confines. We then ended in Ho Chi Minh City. Formerly known as Saigon, it's a city with a wealth of history met by a buzzing present. The likes of colonial post offices, traditional temples and the Notre Dame Cathedral are sandwiched between glass-and-steel skyscrapers thronged with a steady stream of mopeds. It was also where I said goodbye to my new friends from *La Marguerite*, flying home with plenty of happy memories, and photos, to look back on.

Emma's route is available as a 15-day itinerary with APT

**PRICES START FROM £3,995 PP**

incl. flights, transfers, 5 nights accommodation, excursions & 7 nights all-inclusive river cruise with complimentary beverages at all times on board.

For a full itinerary, visit [wexas.com/150032](http://wexas.com/150032) or call 020 7838 5894.

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# A Norwegian cruise with Hurtigruten: summer or winter?



The Hurtigruten ships have long been a Wexas favourite. Originally built as postal vessels – a role they still fulfil to this day – they now also bring passengers up and down the wild Norwegian coast, weaving among mountainous islands and giant fjords to head deep into the Arctic. As such, a Hurtigruten cruise is all about the scenery. Cruise-ship extravagance is replaced by informative lectures, hearty dining – I’m Italian and I haven’t had many better buffets – and days spent on the top deck, overawed by each fresh landscape. Throw in a collection of frontier villages and historic cities and it’s not hard to see why this is fast becoming one of the must-do experiences in cruising.

With all this, there is one question my clients always ask me: “Do I set sail in summer or winter?”

Well, the first thing to consider is the night sky. When crossing over the Arctic Circle in the height of summer, you’ll be treated to scenery



Midnight Sun or Northern Lights? Summer fjords or snowy seascapes? Wexas Scandinavia specialist **Maddalena Cardone** takes an expert’s look at Hurtigruten’s seasonal sailings along Norway’s spectacular Arctic coast.

that glows iridescent under the Midnight Sun. Then, in winter, there’s the spectral dance of the aurora borealis – the world’s greatest visual phenomenon. Hurtigruten even offers its unique Northern Lights Promise – sail again for free if the aurora fails to make an appearance.

There’s also a full spread of wintery activities to consider, from husky sledding and snowmobiling to the gentler pursuits of ice fishing and snowshoeing. Otherwise, when the blanket thaws, you can make the most of the longer days with hiking trips, horse rides and kayaking excursions. In the warmer months, new fjord routes also open up for the ship itself, with some of the most scenic courses reserved for summer.

I’ve particularly fond memories of Geirangerfjord’s cascading waterfalls and bright verdure in June.

But, if you forced me to choose, I’d have to pick winter for the Northern Lights; they really are a highlight of travel. You should bear in mind, though, that it’s all down to personal preference, with the magical allure of summer impossible to ignore.

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